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An analysis and interpretation of Keats' Endymion.

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AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF KEATS' ENDYMION

"I have to apologize to the lovers of simplicity for touching the spell of loneliness that hung about Endymion; if any of my lines plead for me with such people, I shall be proud."

Keats', "First Preface to Endymion"

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PREFACE

PREFACE

My interest in the poet, John Keats, was aroused by bits of local history gathered about the memory of the poet's brother, George Keats, who once lived in Louisville, Kentucky.[1] It was to his brother in this city that Keats addressed the confident prophecy, "I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death,"[2] a prophecy which is now acknowledged to have been true wherever English poetry is read. It is a strange reflection to think that words which moved the austere critic, Matthew Arnold, to proclaim, "He is, he is with Shakespeare,"[3] which have been repeated to triteness, were read the first time human eyes saw them in this spot of all the earth.

The prophetic sentence in the letter to his brother followed a brave statement, "This is a mere

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1. Miss Naomi Kurk of New Albany, Indiana, presented the results of her research into the life of George Keats at a meeting of the Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky, January 1, 1934. There were present a number of great-grandchildren of George Keats. The discussion at the close of the lecture was a deeply interesting experience when family traditions were related and reminiscences were exchanged by the descendants of George Keats and his neighbors.
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, The Letters of John Keats, New York, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 232
3. Arnold, Matthew, Essays in Criticism, Second Series, vol. II, Macmillan and Company, 1893, p. 119

matter of the moment," to indicate the writer's indifference to critical attacks on his poem, Endymion, published in April, 1818. While his friends were endeavoring to neutralize the violence of the biting criticism of powerful reviewers, the poet, secure in the confidence of greater works to come, had assumed a lofty attitude. "A mere matter of the moment," but he did not survive to "glean" his "teeming brain," and Endymion remains his most ambitious completed undertaking.

In my own experience the first result of a careful reading of Endymion was an appreciation of the poetic power in the description of scenery. The narrative, at first obscured by its intricacy and profusion, became clearer as I read. To arrive at the poet's purpose, to trace the narrative with understanding, a close examination was necessary. Interest in the narrative and in the inner meaning of this poem resulted in the writing of a detailed analysis of Endymion. Interpretative comments on single lines or long passages were freely interlaced with the narrative. As I proceeded with the analysis, I held ever in thought an interpretation of the general idea, the spiritual parable, which the poet held so close to his heart.[1] I came to this task with

1. Hewlett, Dorothy, Adonais, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938, p. 170

no preconceived opinions, and have carried it on eager to read in the poetry only what the poet wrote.

This analytic examination of the narrative is a thing which has not been done by another so far as I can discover. The longest discussion of the poem in print may be read in the first volume of Amy Lowell's John Keats. Much of the space allotted to this study of Endymion is devoted to sources of the poem, and the influence of the places Keats visited and of his friends upon its composition. These have been ignored in my analysis, of necessity if for no other reason, since the literary material for any such study is not available to me. Besides the most important thing is to learn what the poet actually wrote. Through his letters we learn, also, what his opinions were at the time of writing. Another and shorter examination of the poem is a part of Sidney Colvin's life of John Keats. This account gives only a broad, very general idea of the narrative. Consequently, a reader could not gain a detailed story from either of these authorities.

My second interest in the preparation of this study has been in interpretation. To the question, What did the poet say? I have added a second, What did he mean? In other words, I have had to come to some conclusion on

a disputed point, the subject of an allegorical interpretation. No other critical interest has been considered. Choice of subject, textual criticism, source material, diction, principles of versification were unnoticed. Two purposes only have governed this writing: to make a detailed analysis of Endymion, and to arrive at an interpretation of the poem.

The first of the two questions considered is answered in the chapters which analyze the poem; the second is answered in part in those same chapters, and to a greater degree in the chapters devoted to criticism. Before beginning my analysis, I shall present in the first chapter a history of the critical opinions which have been published throughout the years since 1818, and shall devote the major portion of the space to the most recent criticism. I shall also in a second chapter preceding my analysis and interpretation, review the circumstances under which Endymion was written. The next four chapters contain the analysis of the four books of the poem. The analysis of each book concludes with a summary of the narrative and an explanation of the relation the particular book bears to Endymion's quest. Chapter Seven then gives my interpretation of a part of

the fourth book, and a final chapter comments on the recent criticism. The results of the detailed study are summarized briefly in the conclusion.

CHAPTER I

A HISTORY OF THE CRITICISM OF ENDYMION

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A HISTORY OF THE CRITICISM OF ENDYMION

Upon its publication in 1818 Endymion met with an unfavorable reception by the great Tory journals, Blackwood's and the Quarterly. Although a decided opposition to the poem was found in these important publications, it can be said that patient research has unearthed a number of contemporary reviews in minor and provincial periodicals which assumed an encouraging attitude.[1] Yet these obscure periodicals counted for little in promoting the popularity of the poem, and "the main body of the edition languished unwanted and unbound"[2] on the publisher's shelves.

A favorable turn in the critical opinion of Endymion occurred upon the publication of Lord Houghton's (Richard Monckton Milnes) Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats in 1848.[3] These volumes contained a series of Keats' familiar letters to his friends in

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1. Marsh, George L., and White, Newman J., "Keats and the Periodicals of His Time," Modern Philology, 32:37-53
2. Hewlett, Dorothy, Op. Cit., p. 193
3. Houghton, Lord (Richard Monckton Milnes), Life and Letters of John Keats, 2 vols., London, George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1848

which his genius shines almost as vividly as in his verse. They were well received; the charm and intelligence of the letters and the just criticism of the author in Milnes' distinguished style dissolved the false conceptions that had haunted the memory of Keats' work from the time of the early reviewers. "I think it is impossible to lay down the book [Endymion]," wrote Lord Houghton, "without feeling that almost every line of it contains solid gold enough to be beaten out by common literary manufacturers, into a poem by itself. Concentration of imagery, the hitting off of a picture at a stroke, the clear decisive word that brings the thing before you and will not let you go, are the rarest distinctions of the early exercise of the faculties." He is not only sympathetic, but also inclined to condone Keats' faults: "So much more is usually known than digested by sensitive youth, so much more felt than understood, so much more perceived than methodized, that diffusion is fairly permitted in the earlier stages of authorship."[1]

These words had their effect. By 1863 Joseph Severn was publishing in the Atlantic an article

1. Ibid., vol. I, p. 27

on "The Vicissitudes of Keats' Fame."[1] A different critical approach was seen in F. M. Owen's, John Keats, A Study, published in 1880.[2] Mrs. Owen was the first to present an allegorical interpretation of Endymion. In this original study "were laid the foundations of a true understanding of Endymion as a parable of the experiences of a poet's soul in its quest after Beauty."[3]

From that time eminent critics continued to publish valuable criticisms of Keats' work. William Michael Rossetti saw Keats as "a man of perception rather than of contemplation or speculation."[4] Matthew Arnold wrote that "Keats was a great spirit" who counted "for far more than many even of his admirers suppose."[5] Professor de Selincourt published an edition of Keats' poems with a scholarly introduction, a portion of which is a criticism of Endymion.[6] He was the first critic since Mrs. Owen to devote much space to this poem,

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1. Severn, Joseph, "The Vicissitudes of Keats' Fame," Atlantic, 11:401-7, April, 1863
2. Owen, F. M., John Keats, A Study, London, C. Kegan Paul and Company, 1880
3. Colvin, Sidney, John Keats, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925, p. 544
4. Rossetti, William Michael, Life of John Keats, London, Walter Scott, 1887, p. 164
5. Arnold, Matthew, Op. Cit., p. 117
6. De Selincourt, Ernest, The Poems of John Keats, Edited with an Introduction and Footnotes, New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1905

and to suggest an implied allegory. These were succeeded in turn by the more recent critics and biographers of Keats in whom we seem to find a critical interest that is predominantly intellectual. With the above brief sketch of the shift in the criticism of Endymion from the first harsh reviews at the time of its publication to the studious consideration later accorded the poem, we come to the recent criticism.

During the last twenty years the phases of Keats' work which have inspired research and critical analysis are four: (1) the sources of the plot and the underlying philosophical thought attributed to Elizabethan influences; (2) a probable allegorical interpretation; (3) a psychological revelation of the poet's mind seen in the poem itself; and (4) some consideration of the form, or plan of the poem.

This examination of Endymion criticism is restricted to articles published within the last twenty years. For convenience the material is grouped under the headings just enumerated. Comment upon these critical opinions will follow a detailed analysis of Endymion. Whenever the work of several critics is reviewed, their names are listed in the order of their publications.

First, modern critics conclude that Keats derived ideas for both the structure and the thought of Endymion from Elizabethan writers: Spenser, Sandys, Shakespeare, and Drayton. The plot, according to Sidney Colvin,[1] Claude Lee Finney,[2] and Amy Lowell,[3] who recorded that she had had access to an unpublished thesis of Claude Lee Finney,[4] contains similarities to the structure of Drayton's poems, Man in the Moone and Endimion and Phoebe. Sidney Colvin and Claude Lee Finney maintain that the poem contains much of the neo-Platonism absorbed from Drayton and Spenser.

Second, following the example of Mrs. Owen in 1880[5] and Professor de Selincourt in 1905, the recent writers on Keats discuss the probability of an implied allegory in the story of Endymion. Clarence De Witt Thorpe,[6] H. Clement Notcutt,[7] John Middleton Murry,[8] and

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1. Colvin, Sidney, John Keats, 1917 (first edition)
2. Finney, Claude Lee, "Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe' and Keats' 'Endymion,'" Publication Modern Language Association, 39:805-13, December, 1924
3. Lowell, Amy, John Keats, 2 vols., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925
4. Ibid., vol. I, p. 330
5. See below, p. 15
6. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, The Mind of John Keats, London, Oxford University Press, 1926
7. Notcutt, H. Clement, Endymion, A Poetic Romance by John Keats, with an Introduction and Notes, London, Oxford University Press, 1927
8. Murry, J. Middleton, Studies in Keats, London, Oxford University Press, 1930

Claude Lee Finney[1] follow this earlier lead in tracing allegorical significance in Endymion. Amy Lowell in her biography published in 1925 utterly rejects this proposition.

Third, several critics have shown a keen appreciation of the psychological significance of particular passages or lines in Endymion. Those whose comments will be noted are Amy Lowell, Clarence De Witt Thorpe,[2] and J. Middleton Murry. Excerpts from Keats' letters are frequently used, also, by Amy Lowell, Clarence De Witt Thorpe, and Claude Lee Finney in psychological explanations of Endymion.

Fourth, an opinion that Keats had a more careful arrangement of material than was at first perceived, suggested by Sidney Colvin (1917), was opposed by Amy Lowell (1925), and supported by Claude Lee Finney (1936).

Certain facts about the sources of Keats' material and his style have been agreed upon by critics from the time any serious study was made of Endymion. It is commonly stated that Keats was intensely interested in mythology, that he was charmed by the Endymion story,

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, The Evolution of Keats' Poetry, 2 vols., Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1936
2. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, "Keats' Interest in Politics and World Affairs," Publication Modern Language Association, 46:1128-45, December, 1931, and The Mind of John Keats, 1926

that his poetic talents were aroused by reading Spenser, and that he devoted intense study to the works of Elizabethan poets. According to Professor Finney, "Keats' knowledge of Elizabethan literature was not only extensive, but also recondite."[1] In the poem (I, 34-37) Keats affirmed he had always been charmed by the Endymion story. It is known from the testimony of Cowden Clarke that Keats "memorized" Lemprière's Classical Dictionary during his school days. Lempriere used only two hundred words to tell the story of Endymion; this account is supposed to be the original source through which Keats became acquainted with the myth. In point of fact it is generally conceded by critics that Keats derived the substance of his poetry more from the Elizabethan masters than from other sources. Since he could not absorb classical culture in its pure form, and scorned to form his conception of the antique world by reading Dryden and Pope, he was compelled to use the classical allusions, adaptations, and imitations of the ancient culture which he found in the poetry of the Elizabethans: Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman, Drayton, and Sandys.[2]

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, "Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe' and Keats' 'Endymion,'" p.801
2. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 206

We have evidence that besides Lempriere there were other Elizabethan writers whose influence may be seen in Endymion. From early youth the poet had been interested in the Elizabethan poets. Cowden Clarke introduced him to the ornate verse of the Faerie Queene with its allegorical intricacies, the reading of which has been credited with awakening Keats to his own poetic endowment. Lord Houghton declared that "the effect of this great work of literature was electrical."[1] Still another Elizabethan work, Sandys' translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, made him familiar with classic fable. Sidney Colvin, for one, considers it important that "Sandys in the fine Oxford folio edition of his book which we know Keats used, must needs conform to a fixed mediaeval and Renaissance tradition by 'mythologizing' his text with a commentary"[2] of highly moral purpose. Thus, the reading of Spenser awakened his talent. Reading Lempriere furnished a most meager skeleton of the story; and Sandys, fables and allegorizing elements.

For a further measure of his interest in Elizabethan poetry we have Keats' own testimony in his letters of the influence his reading of Shakespeare was exerting

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1. Lord Houghton, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 7
2. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 171

over his mind and spirit during the composition of Endymion.[1] The critics say that in this close reading of Shakespeare may be discerned the source of the characteristic diction of Endymion. According to Professor de Selincourt the influence of this study may be seen in "the vocabulary and phraseology of Endymion, in the influx of Shakespearean words, allusions, and reminiscences, drawn from a large number of plays."[2] One of the most interesting of recent volumes of Keats' criticism is Miss Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's Keats' Shakespeare.[3] Miss Spurgeon, enjoying an October holiday not far from New York, heard incidentally of an edition of Shakespeare that had belonged to Keats who, it appears, gave the volumes to his friend, Joseph Severn. The books which were then in a Princeton library, nearby, are the very volumes the poet was reading during the composition of Endymion, and they show his habit of underlining phrases which struck him. The markings and wear testify that the plays most read were The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Instances in Endymion of a similarity to the model's diction and phraseology are analytically examined in Miss Spurgeon's book.

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1. See below, p. 41
2. De Selincourt, Ernest, Op. Cit., p. 416
3. Spurgeon, Caroline Frances Eleanor, Keats' Shakespeare, London, Oxford University Press, 1928

A very definite Elizabethan influence in Endymion may be seen in both structural and descriptive elements which have been traced to Drayton by Sidney Colvin,[1] Professor Finney,[2] and Amy Lowell.[3] The Endymion myth, "that one bare circumstance" of which Keats was to make a long poem, had been used by nearly all Elizabethan poets, briefly or at length. Keats' predecessor who treated the poem at length was Drayton. Sidney Colvin points out similarities in the plot of Endymion to Drayton's Man in the Moone. Professor Finney was the first to demonstrate in an article published in 1924 Keats' probable indebtedness not only to Drayton's Man in the Moone but also to his Endimion and Phoebe.[4] The similarities of the Keats and Drayton poems are explained by Finney to be both structural and descriptive. Amy Lowell in her biography (1925) argues that it was possible for Keats to have seen the latter rare poem by Drayton. She gives much space to quotations and explanations of the analogies.

The accepted truth that Keats' genius was awakened

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1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., pp. 169 et sqq.
2. Finney, Claude Lee, "Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe' and Keats' 'Endymion,'" p. 801
3. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, pp. 323 et sqq.
4. Finney, Claude Lee, "Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe' and Keats' 'Endymion,'" pp. 805-813

by reading Spenser[1] is the approach for a study by recent writers of particular elements of Keats' Endymion; I refer to the philosophical thought they find in the poem. It was Lord Houghton, Keats' first biographer, who had written that reading the Faerie Queene was "not only his open presentation at the court of the Muses... but it was the great impulse of his poetic life, and the stream of his inspiration remained long coloured by the rich soil over which it first had flowed."[2] The element of Platonism from Spenser's work, Sidney Colvin noted in comments such as these: "He was familiar enough with Spenser's mellifluous dilution of Platonic and neo-Platonic doctrine in his four Hymns." He also declared that Endymion contained, "An idea, nearer to the Platonic, of a single principle of absolute or abstract Beauty, the object of a purged and perfected spiritual contemplation, from which all the varieties of Beauty experienced on earth derive their quality and oneness."[3] This element of Platonism has been more fully examined by Professor Finney. His interpretation of Endymion as a neo-Platonic quest for immortality, succeeding finally through love, after tracing

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1. See above, p. 8
2. Lord Houghton, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 7
3. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 237

the hero's progress through love of nature, art, friendship, and spiritual love corresponding in order to the four books of the poem, was first explained in his paper, Keats' Philosophy of Beauty: An Interpretation of Endymion in the Light of the Neo-Platonism of Spenser.[1] (1926) This philosophic study establishes the Spenserian influence definitely.[2]

Professor Finney suggests that a mistake has been made in interpreting Endymion without reference to the philosophy of Keats' Elizabethan masters, since "from these Keats conceived the Greek spirit and principle of beauty in all things."[3] The essence of the neo-Platonism which Keats adopted from the Elizabethan poets, Spenser especially, Professor Finney explains, was a belief in the principle of unity that transcends the eternal flux of the material world. "Since the neo-Platonists found no tranquillity of soul in the mutable world of sense, they founded their philosophy on a denial of matter and an affirmation of the reality of spirit."[4] In his book,

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, "Keats' Philosophy of Beauty: An Interpretation of Endymion in the Light of the Neo-Platonism of Spenser," Philological Quarterly, 5:1-19, January, 1926
2. See, also, Finney, Claude Lee, The Evolution of Keats' Poetry, vol. I, pp. 250 et sqq.
3. Finney, Claude Lee, "Keats' Philosophy of Beauty: An Interpretation of Endymion in the Light of the Neo-Platonism of Spenser," p. 2
4. Ibid., p. 3

The Evolution of Keats' Poetry, published in 1936, Professor Finney quoted from the first book of Endymion,

> . . . Apollo's upward fire
> Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
> Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
> A melancholy spirit well might win
> Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine,
> I, 95-99

as an example of Platonic spiritualization of the soul affected in surroundings of great beauty in the Latmian forest.

Professor Finney's article also gives to the reader a neo-Platonic explanation of the dreams, or visions, which comprised the hero's quest related in Endymion. Referring to the quest of the soul for union with God, or Original Essence, the critic wrote, "It may also be attained temporarily by man during his earthly existence by means of the neo-Platonic ecstasy or state of prophetic vision, in which his sensuous perceptions of the ever-changing world of matter dissolves away, in which the soul puts off its garment of flesh and stands naked in the presence of the beauty of God."[1]

To summarize, it has been seen that Keats was first awakened to his poetic talents through reading

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1. Ibid., p. 6

Spenser. From the Elizabethan poets, Sandys in particular, he acquired his taste for allegorizing. The results of his enthusiastic study of Shakespeare are apparent in the diction and phraseology of Endymion. Certain of the recent critics have considered the aid in plot construction which Keats absorbed, consciously or unconsciously, from a study of the Elizabethans, since it appears that Drayton's poems supplied points of structure and description for Endymion. Another aspect of this criticism deals with the neo-Platonism of the Elizabethan poets, Spenser especially, reflected in Endymion.

In addition, recent criticism often deals with a question much disputed by students of Endymion, the question of allegorical interpretation. It seems not to have engaged the thought of any of his earlier critics. Indeed, Lord Houghton wrote that "the artistic absence of any moral purpose may offend many readers,"[1] and it was sixty years after the poet's death before an attempt was made by a critic to trace an allegorical meaning in Endymion. In recent critical studies the statement occurs that such an interpretation of the poem was first published

1. Lord Houghton, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 278

in 1880, Keats, A Study, by F. M. Owen.[1] Professor Thorpe in 1926 summarized Mrs. Owen's interpretation after this manner: "Endymion is the story of the Spirit of Man, which becomes awakened by a higher spiritual power, and thence begins a quest for the higher spiritual state. This he eventually reaches after a series of trials through earth, air, and water."[2]

With one exception all of the critical opinions published within the last twenty years have concurred in presenting some sort of allegorical interpretation of Endymion. I shall report briefly the distinguishing characteristics of these interpretations.

Some of the most eminent critics when they have approached the subject of Endymion have gone into this question of allegory at length. Professor Thorpe, a student of Keats who is interested in the poet's aesthetic ideas, bases his allegorical interpretation upon the "Wherein lies Happiness?" passage (I, 777-842), "the passage which above all others most plainly reveals allegory."[3] Professor Thorpe examines Keats' statements

1. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, The Mind of John Keats, p. 4
2. Ibid., p. 5
3. Ibid., p. 54

in his letter to Taylor.[1] According to this interpretation, Endymion is the poet in search of the Mystery, by which he means "ultimate, ideal truth."[2] He continues to think of Endymion's searching for truth, rather than for beauty, although the latter is the more frequent interpretation. He decides that the poet in this notable passage was "dimly outlining in this poem the successive stages of the poetic development towards realization of this truth the final Mystery , and was, moreover, showing the relations of these gradations and experiences to each other."[3] The discovery in the final book that Diana and the Indian maiden are one indicates not only "the necessity of rising to a height of insight into the secret of the universe through the gradations of sensuous and human reality," but also, "an essential final unity in the three orders -- Nature, Humanity, and the higher spiritual essence."[4]

An analysis of the steps defined in the long Gradations of Happiness passage (I, 777-842) reveals the allegory as he sees it. To justify holding to an allegory,

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1. See below, p. 59
2. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, Op. Cit., p. 55
3. Ibid., p. 55
4. Ibid., p. 56

Professor Thorpe declares that "Underneath all is a substance of thought, none the less real because sometimes all but concealed."[1] Book One, he considers, represents the first wild taste of sensuous beauty--the trance-like state; Book Two, the poetic soul under the full dominion of sensuous beauty; Book Three, an adventure in human friendship and sympathy; Book Four, an adventure which brings about a complete union of the soul with the heart of humanity. Thus "through nature and the sensuously beautiful in man, the poet learns to know the human heart, and through the human heart, the secret of all worth knowing in the universe. And in the end he finds united in one ideal the visions that drew him on in the pursuit of each."[2]

A not dissimilar interpretation of an allegory through a study of this passage (I, 777-842) is arrived at by Professor Finney, which he first published in the Philological Quarterly in 1926.[3] To him Endymion is an allegory of the neo-Platonic quest of immortality through four gradations--nature, art, friendship, and love, -- which constitute the four books of Endymion.[4]

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1. Ibid., p. 57
2. Ibid., p. 62
3. It was included, also, in his "The Evolution of Keats' Poetry," 1936
4. Finney, Claude Lee, Op. Cit., p. 298

These interpretations of Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney, which were both published in 1926, were followed four years later by J. Middleton Murry's Studies in Keats. In this book we find a chapter, "The Meaning of Endymion." J. Middleton Murry, too, discovers the clue to the interpretation of Endymion in a long lyrical passage. Contrary to Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney who found in the Gradations of Happiness passage (I, 777-842) a clue to the real meaning of the poem, Murry considers these same lines of little importance in interpretation, for "there is a good deal of mere words in that passage."[1] Beside denying special import to these lines, this critic believes that Endymion is a "transition piece." It begins in a first period and ends in a second. As a result the most significant lines would be found in the second stage of the poet's thinking. Therefore, although he admitted that the theme of Endymion is the quest of the poet for abstract Beauty, he found in the fourth book of the poem the passage he used for interpretation. The passage commonly called the Cave of Quietude in the fourth book (512-51) together with Keats' letters written during the composition of the

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1. Murry, J. Middleton, Op. Cit., p. 54

final book, is the ground for J. Middleton Murry's analysis of Endymion. His judgment is that the Cave of Quietude is a psychological experience representing desperate inward conflict, a soul divided, in this instance between a human passion and an imaginative passion, and finding its own personality destroyed in the conflict. Murry argues that this strange experience is the "psychological culmination" of the poem, and that Endymion achieved his final peace through a supreme agony of soul. The shepherd prince had become Keats' own soul. When the poet commiserated with his hero,

> Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
> Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:
> Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem
> Truth the best music in a first-born song,
> IV, 77-73

the conflict between the "Ideal and the Real which divided the soul of his hero was too intimate and real to Keats himself to be speciously resolved by a poetic miracle. The abstract parable had become the painful adventure of his own soul. . .To invoke a miracle simply to tell the legendary story was a kind of cheating."[1]

The extreme in the matter of allegorical meanings

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1. Ibid., p. 44

read into this poem is found in an edition of Endymion, A Poetic Romance by John Keats, with an Introduction and Notes by Professor H. Clement Notcutt, from Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa. Notcutt's interpretation is both ingenious and detailed. Beginning with the essential idea that Endymion portrays the experiences of the poetic soul in its search for absolute Beauty, he proceeds to explain to the minutest detail the significance to the allegory of many figures, events, and actions in the story. He fancied that the poet's search for Beauty was a search for perfect poetry and symbolized the triumph of the Romantic school. Since the author feels that his statements of the allegory in the four books "define in the briefest possible way, their allegorical significance," I shall quote Professor Notcutt's synopses.

"In the first book the festival of Pan symbolises the revival of interest in the beauty and the mysterious power of Nature which had marked the opening of a new poetic era. The repeated appearances of the moon goddess to Endymion represent the awakening of the man who is destined to be a poet, to the beauty of the ideal which he must strive to attain.

"The second book, in the story of Endymion's journey underground, gives us a picture of the course of

preparation--chiefly through the study of the great writers of earlier times--by which the young poet may fit himself for his task. It shows that even though weariness and depression may be his lot for a time, yet if he perseveres he may meet with a revaluation of life and beauty which will stimulate and encourage him.

"The third book contains a warning. Under the guise of the disastrous experiences of Glaucus it tells how in an earlier time English poetry had been led astray by a powerful but evil influence, by which Pope stands as the chief representative; and how after a long period of impotence and decrepitude, it was restored to life and vigour by the redeeming power of the spirit of the new era.

"The fourth book tells how the poet, still in pursuit of his ideal, is perplexed by the call of humanity in trouble, and is torn between the desire to devote himself to the service of his suffering fellow creatures and the other desire to reach the ideal after which he has so long been striving; until at length the conflict and perplexity vanish when he sees that for him the two ideals are but one, for he can best serve his fellow men by entering fully into the poetic life.

"It may further be noted that the wide range of

experience through which Endymion is made to pass--on the earth and under it, in the depths of the ocean and in the regions of the air--suggest that the poet must learn to look at life in various aspects and from different points of view before he is really fitted to take up the task to which he is called."[1]

In this explanation Professor Notcutt fits a biographical fact into the allegory, at the same time providing an explanation for the action and character. For instance, the sacrifice to Pan according to Professor Notcutt's analysis, indicates an awakening to the beauty of nature which the Romanticists expressed. The young poet then feels the call in dreams to devote his life to portraying his vision of ideal beauty. When he comes down to earth, he is depressed, and endures alternate moods of depression and hope which symbolize Keats' difficulties in deciding whether to practice surgery or to devote his life to poetry. Peona, too, this critic considers, is a dramatization of Keats' sister, Fanny, who voiced the objections which she had heard in her guardian's home to Keats' abandonment of the profession of surgery. Further to complete this biographical allegory, the critic believes that one man

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1. Notcutt, H. Clement, Op. Cit., pp. xviii-xix

is more deeply touched than the rest of the nation by a fresh consciousness of the beauty of the world, and thence that one pursues a lonely way in search of his ideal.

Continuing with his analysis of the allegory, Professor Notcutt finds that the second book is a parable of the earnest and painstaking study which a poet must undertake before he has fully learned his craft. Since Keats had written in "Sleep and Poetry" (l.96) that he needed ten years so that he might overwhelm himself in poetry, his journey into "the sparry hollows" of the world (II, 204) meant that he had entered upon a close study of the great masters of poetry of earlier ages. The richness and beauty of the underground scene represent the same qualities in the works of great poets. That extraordinary occasion when flowers sprang up through the marble pavement (II, 341-43) represents the beauty of old literature, as it occasionally reveals itself to the young student.

> . . . An orbed diamond, set to fray
> Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the sun
> Uprisen over chaos, . . .
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> II, 245-47

is Homer, whose poems "stand out for us with all the greater brilliance against the darkness of the previous

age."[1] The temple which Endymion examined so minutely (II, 257-76) represents the patient study the school boy Keats had given to the Aeneid. Another notion is to identify the water phantasmagoria (II, 606-32) with Ovid's "Metamorphoses," an identification based upon the phrases "changed magic" (613) and "founts Protean," (627) and the fact that Keats drew upon the "Metamorphoses" for stories used in the second and third books.

Professor Notcutt says that the obscure introduction to the third book, instead of being a diatribe against politicians, is an evidence of Keats' antipathy to the Augustan poets. Endymion's love for the moon expresses his love for "the beauty of rhythm and form in poetry," (p.xxxvi) and his love for the goddess "the more intense beauty that belongs to emotion and passion." He argues that Circe is Pope satirizing minor poets of his day, and that the magic scroll (III, 670) is Percy's "Reliques," which were powerful enough in a new era to redeem poetry from the curse that had so long blighted it. The pageantry in the remainder of the third book typifies the joy and delight which followed the revival of poetry.

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1. Ibid., p. xxix

The allegory in the fourth book, Notcutt says, expresses the struggle Keats underwent when he was compelled to choose between the practice of a profession by which he could benefit humanity, and the desire to be a poet. The Indian maid is the call of humanity; the goddess, the call of poetry. As his choice between the two fluctuates, so do the protagonists. The final disappearance of Endymion and Cynthia is the decision of the poet to devote himself to poetry.

This is the most elaborate explanation of an allegory yet advanced. At the opposite pole is Amy Lowell's opinion. She asserts, "As to allegory that was completely foreign to Keats' nature. There is no trace of allegory to be found anywhere in his works."[1] She thinks that, "Keats' mind was not of the kind that works in parables."[2] Amy Lowell, in company with Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney whose conclusions have been quoted, analyzes the famous Gradations of Happiness passage.[3] In her opinion it is "the most moving bit of personal revelation in the whole book. Here is Keats' creed, his longing, his hope, and his dedication."[4]

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 318
2. Ibid., p. 456
3. See I,770-843
4. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 357

More than once reference is made to this passage as the "creed passage." True to her contention that there is no allegory, Amy Lowell comments on Keats' statement in his letter of January 30, 1818, to his publisher, Taylor. In the letter to Taylor which was written after the completion of Endymion, Keats wrote, "This passage was a regular stepping of the Imagination towards a truth."[1] Ignoring this statement of the poet of his intention to explain the symbolism of Endymion, she writes that, "Keats had armed himself through the above statement with a good dramatic reason for the poem in general and this passage in particular. The only trouble is that it fits nothing and nowhere and must therefore be regarded as a camouflage."[2] Thus she declares that the passage in which Professor Finney and Professor Thorpe found a statement of an intended allegory has no relation with the poem. Again in objection to an allegorical interpretation, she makes a positive statement that, "Keats was concerned with poetry as an art, not as a tract."[3] In short, because she was convinced that allegory was foreign to Keats' nature, she disputes the position of

1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 91
2. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 361
3. Ibid., p. 456

Professor Finney and Professor Thorpe that the Gradations of Happiness passage outlines an allegory, calling it instead "Keats' creed." Likewise she questions the poet's sincerity in his statement upon the disputed passage, and declares Keats' chief concern was with art, and not with ethics.

To sum up the thought of the most scholarly critics, I find all, with one exception, agree that there is an underlying, general allegorical meaning. Professor Thorpe, Professor Finney, and J. Middleton Murry agree on this, that each of the four books represents a stage in the poet's search for Beauty, Love, or Truth--the Ideal. One critic, Professor Notcutt, writes an industrious and elaborate exposition which identifies Endymion with the re-awakening of poetry in the Romantic Period. The exception to those who agree on an allegorical interpretation, is Amy Lowell, who writes, "Endymion is no allegory."[1]

When we come to the third point in the recent criticism of Endymion, the psychological significance of particular lines or passages, we find that Amy Lowell is inconsistent in statements on this question. In her judgment the poem is significant as a study in the

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1. Ibid., p. 456

development of the mind of a poet: "One man began it, and another ended it."[1] From a general viewpoint, she writes that in Endymion Keats composed "a psychological piece of no mean significance."[2] However, in reference to a particular portion, she states that, "There is not the slightest hint of psychology in the Third Book."[3] The psychological importance Amy Lowell finds in Endymion is the evidence of Keats' maturing mind. She does not see psychological significance in either particular lines or passages.

I next report Professor Thorpe's study of Endymion, published in 1926. A strong point in his allegorical interpretation is the attention devoted to occasional lines of psychological value which he feels are self-revelatory; for an example, Endymion's despairing cry for the renewed consciousness of his spiritual identity:

> . . .What is this soul then? Whence
> Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
> Have no self-passion, or identity.
> IV, 475-77

This critic has studied the mind of John Keats, rather than the character of Endymion.

The psychological nature of J. Middleton Murry's

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1. Ibid., p. 460
2. Ibid., p. 387
3. Ibid., p. 414

explanation of the allegory has been noted.[1] This tendency to reflect on the psychological aspects of the character of Endymion is yet another indication of the intellectual interest which Endymion now arouses in critics. One can not refer to this psychological phase of the criticism of Endymion without noticing the importance attached by all the critics to a careful study of Keats' letters for clues to the state of his thought during the year April, 1817 to April, 1818. Not a single critic has written of Endymion without quoting portions of the letters. Lord Houghton recognized their value. "It is difficult to add anything to the passages in these letters which show the spirit in which Endymion was written and published."[2] Sidney Colvin in 1917 ascribed the search for the meaning of Endymion "to the scrutiny of students reading and re-reading the poem by the light of incidental utterances in his earlier and later poetry and in his miscellaneous letters."[3] Again we may read a statement in Finney's The Evolution of Keats' Poetry of recent date, "The letters which Keats wrote in the fall and winter of 1817 reveal the philosophy of life and of poetry which he had thought out during the seven months

1. See above, p. 19
2. Lord Houghton, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 94
3. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 172

in which he had worked on the composition of Endymion."[1]

An article by Thorpe contains this emphatic statement. "Such outbursts," writes Professor Thorpe referring to the poet's invective against rulers in the lines introducing the third book of Endymion, "reveal the intensity with which Keats thought and felt on such subjects: the instinct and fire were there, as the letters show, but sublimated, the poet habitually suppressing the reformer."[2]

Thus the tenor of Keats' criticism is evidently directed more to the intellectual or philosophical aspects of Endymion. Individual critics are evincing in their publications an increasing interest in this phase of criticism. In the article from which I have just quoted, printed in 1931, Professor Thorpe declares, "Keats had a philosophy of poetry. . . He knew that poetry had a higher mission than to reform: its business is to interpret the human heart, to illuminate life with its universal aspects."[3] As may be seen through these quotations, a critical interest, psychological in character, is seen not only in the study of lines and certain passages from Endymion, but also in a study of the poet's letters. For most critics the psychology of the letters in so far as

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, Op. Cit., p. 237
2. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, Loc. Cit., p. 1244
3. Ibid., p. 1243

they relate to Endymion, now aids in understanding the poem.

Morphological analyses of Endymion have also been made by recent critics. Sidney Colvin writes that when Keats retired to the country in April, 1817, "to get firmly to work on his new task, it is clear that he had its main outlines and dimensions settled in his mind,"[1] and that "he adhered almost exactly to his original purpose, dividing it into four books and finding in himself resources enough to draw them out, all except the first, to a little over a thousand lines each."[2] On the other hand, Amy Lowell asserts that the poem is chaotic because, "Keats was chaotic at the time."[3] Definitely she declares that if one judged Endymion "as a long poem with a beginning, a middle, and an end, it was a failure."[4] Furthermore, she condemns as careless the structure at the end of the poem, when she writes, "Keats laid philosophy aside and ended with a pure story."[5]

However, there are indications that the morphology of Endymion is being given more respectful regard by critics. In his latest work, Claude Lee Finney writes

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1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 164
2. Ibid., p. 165
3. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 457
4. Ibid., p. 460
5. Ibid., p. 458

"Keats did not compose Endymion at random. He worked out the whole plan of the poem before he composed a single verse. He invented the episodes, arranged them into four groups, and thought out the allegory. The whole poem he decided should consist of 4000 verses. He set for himself a schedule of composition. By composing 50 verses a day, he estimated he could complete the poem by autumn."[1]

The exposition of the four phases into which recent Endymion criticism divides itself has been completed.

The history of the criticism of Endymion beginning, as it did, with disdain and ridicule in high circles, evolved from that point through increasing esteem to the present high appreciation of the intellectual qualities of the poem. The journals of 1818, powerful in political and social circles, would see neither beauty nor reason in the verse. Lord Houghton first gave it unstinted praise in his biography of Keats (1848). Then about 1880 a deep interest in the poetry of Keats was manifested in a number of publications by renowned critics. This interest has not decreased. It appears that for the past twenty years the concern of the critics has been mainly with

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, Op. Cit., p. 209

intellectual phases of Endymion criticism.

Much has been written about the influence of the Elizabethan poets: Spenser, Shakespeare, and Drayton, upon the diction, structure, and thought of Endymion. Miss Spurgeon was able to show through an analysis of the markings in the copy of Shakespeare belonging to Keats, the effect upon the diction of Endymion of the poet's study of certain plays. Sidney Colvin, Amy Lowell, and Claude Lee Finney demonstrated Keats' indebtedness to Drayton by pointing out analogies in plot and scenes of Keats' poem to Drayton's poems on the same subject. Professor Colvin and Professor Finney discussed the effect of neo-Platonic philosophy upon the thought of Endymion.

Nearly all recent critics have agreed that Keats was writing an allegory in Endymion. Professor Thorpe, Professor Finney, and J. Middleton Murry find the clues to the allegory in a long lyric passage of the poem. Another critic, H. Clement Notcutt, interprets Endymion as an allegory portraying the re-awakening of English poetry in the early Nineteenth Century under the genius of the Romantic school. Amy Lowell, alone of those critics who consider the question, finds no suggestion of allegory in Keats' poem.

Critics like Professor Thorpe and J. Middleton Murry

have been interested in the self-revelations of psychological lines or passages. Amy Lowell thinks the psychological significance is general, rather than particular. Without exception, the recent critics, as well as those of the Nineteenth Century, have found Keats' letters during the period of the composition a key to much of the true inner meaning of the poem.

Professor Finney finds that Keats' poem was a piece of careful construction, a morphologic criticism in line with a suggestion of Sidney Colvin. On the other hand, Amy Lowell denies that Endymion gives evidence of a careful plan.

In all this criticism the authorities have not made a detailed analysis of Endymion, book by book. They have cited passages like I, 777-842, as explanation for believing Endymion contains an allegory. They have, also, stated briefly the theme of the allegory for each book according to their interpretations. Further than that no one of these great critics has gone in respect to analysis of the poem.

Before I present an interpretation of Endymion, I propose to make a detailed analysis of each of the four books in turn. Primarily it will enter into the narrative. However, with the story will be interlarded comments,

interpretative, and psychological. I shall make use of Keats' revealing letters, as others have done, whenever they are helpful in understanding the poet's thought. In the next chapter I shall discuss Keats' attitude towards his work and its inspiration.

CHAPTER II

A HISTORY OF THE WRITING

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An inquiry to determine what Keats thought of Endymion at the time he was writing the poem and later establishes two motives of the poet as certain. Keats had deliberately set out in the spring of the year to try his wings in a great flight, and he had determined to work alone, uninfluenced. In regard to the latter, after writing the greater portion of the poem, he wrote to his friend, Benjamin Bailey, October, 1817, "You see how independent my writing has been--Hunt's dissuasion was of no avail--I refused to visit Shelley, that I might have my own unfettered scope."[1] We know one decision made by Keats against which Hunt had failed to influence him adversely. Earlier in this letter the poet had written, "I have heard Hunt say and I may be asked--why endeavour after a long Poem?" In spite of Hunt's objection, however, he was writing a long poem.

Early in March, 1817, John Keats had left his usual haunts in the London literary circle to go to the country for quiet and solitude which he and his brothers

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 53

felt would enable him to carry out his great venture. To his friend John Hamilton Reynolds he had confided, "My brothers are anxious that I should go by myself into the country--they have always been extremely fond of me, and now that Haydon has pointed out how necessary it is that I should be alone to improve myself they give up the temporary pleasure of living with me continually for a great good which I hope will follow."[1]

The "great good" for which he hoped was a long poem. Quoting from his own letter to his brother George, Keats had written Bailey, "It [the long poem] will be a test, a trial of my Powers of Imagination and chiefly of my invention which is a rare thing indeed--by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance, and fill them with Poetry; and when I consider that this is a great task, and that when done it will take me but a dozen paces towards the Temple of Fame--it makes me say--God forbid that I should be without such a task."[2] He regarded this writing as his novitiate. As Amy Lowell observes, "His writing Endymion was to him what the vigil of watching his armour was to a young knight in the Middle Ages. He sees

1. Ibid., p. 15
2. Ibid., p. 52

it as a stupendous task to be undertaken as a necessary part of his initiation to poethood."[1]

The young poet began his work an immature and inexperienced artist. His long poem designed to be a test of invention, was his proving ground. It was a real test; he was often discouraged, and wrote in humility, "The high idea I have of poetical fame makes me think I see it towering too high above me."[2] He was drawing near the end of the third book of Endymion, when he wrote, "My ideas with respect to it Endymion I assure you are very low--and I would write the subject thoroughly again--but I am tired of it . . . and all the good I expect from my employment this summer is the fruit of Experience."[3]

An occasional unevenness in the quality of the lines is one evidence of this immaturity of which Keats himself was aware. There are instances of the most beautiful lyrical passages being followed by lines of dull or childish character. There is not a fault ascribed to it which he did not regret, "I fought under disadvantages. Before I began I had no inward feel of being able to finish; and as I proceeded my steps were all uncertain. So this poem

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 358
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 52
3. Ibid., p. 51

must rather be considered as an endeavour than as a thing accomplished, a poor prologue to what if I live, I humbly hope to do."[1] Thus he wrote in a preface he had originally prepared and then rejected.

In addition to the unevenness and uncertainty, Keats' inexperience is seen in the confusion of details, scenes, or narratives. "I am continually running away from the subject--sure this can not be exactly the case with a complex Mind--one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits"[2] was written to the sympathetic Bailey. If the poet is at times naive, sentimental, or unrestrained, these are faults he recognized. To his publisher, John Taylor, he wrote, "In Endymion I have most likely but moved into the Go-cart from the leading strings," and, "If Endymion serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content."[3]

When the time arrived that a preface for his book must be supplied, Keats wrote a preface of which his publisher and his friends disapproved. Reluctantly he wrote a second preface which was used in the first printing. In the original preface Keats stated that he expected the

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 607
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 68
3. Ibid., p. 108

reader "to perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplish'd." Nevertheless it was a bitter criticism he prepared for himself when he admitted to the critics in the preface which was used, "The imagination of a boy is healthy; and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life in between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted; thence proceed mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which these men I speak of [critics] must necessarily taste in going over the following pages." Here then is a young poet attempting a task he plainly feels is beyond his powers, but working courageously in spite of his own consciousness of immaturity and inexperience.

Still Keats had one source of great strength while he labored during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1817. He was leaning heavily upon the influence of great poets of other days. From Southampton, his first stop in the journey to find a congenial place for writing his great work, he wrote to his brothers, April 15, 1817, "I felt rather lonely this Morning at breakfast so I went and unbox'd a Shakespeare--'Here's my comfort.'"[1] In May a letter

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1. Ibid., p. 17

to Benjamin Haydon, the artist, conveyed this sentiment, "I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare--indeed I think I shall never read any other Book much."[1] Of more importance in showing the dependence he placed upon his reading is another statement in this letter, "I remember your saying you had notions of a good genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought--for things which I do half at Random are afterwards confirmed by my judgment in a dozen features of Propriety. Is it too daring to Fancy Shakespeare this Presidor?"

There were other poets whose spiritual aid he gratefully acknowledged in those revealing letters to his absent friends. To John Hamilton Reynolds, April 18, 1817, he wrote, "I find I can not exist without poetry--without eternal poetry--half the day will not do--the whole of it--I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan--I had become all in a Tremble from not having written anything of late--the Sonnet over leaf did me some good. I slept the better last night for it--this Morning, however, I am nearly as bad again--Just now I opened Spenser, and the first lines I saw were these:

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1. Ibid., p. 31

'The noble Heart that harbors virtuous thought,
And is with Child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest, until it forth have brought
Th' eternal Brood of Glory excellent.'"[1]

The poet was well along in his poem, having worked at it for a month, when he found himself so wearied that he wrote his publishers, "I hope soon to be able to resume my Work--I have endeavoured to do so once or twice but to no Purpose--instead of Poetry--I have a swimming in my head--and feel all the effects of a Mental Debauch--lowness of spirits--anxiety to go on without the Power to do so . . . This evening I go to Canterbury . . . At Canterbury I hope the remembrance of Chaucer will set me forward like a Billiard-Ball."[2]

Six months had passed since he had thought to lean on the memory of Chaucer, months of arduous labor in writing the great poem; and he was in the throes of creating the fourth and last book, when he expressed to Bailey a judgment which showed how much his thoughts had been preoccupied with beauty: "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth."[3] Again a lapse of weeks, and he had completed the task he had set himself. In a letter

1. Ibid., pp. 21-22
2. Ibid., p. 34
3. Ibid., p. 67

addressed to his brothers, December, 1817, is a restatement of his moving principle, "That with a great poet the cause of Beauty overcomes every other combination or rather obliterates all consideration."[1] The search of the poetic soul for Beauty is the guiding principle in the composition of Endymion. What his imagination had pictured as beautiful must rest in the story of the shepherd-prince, Endymion. An analysis of the story follows.

1. Ibid., p. 72

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF BOOK ONE

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A thing of beauty is a joy forever.
I, 1

With this expression of his belief in the immortality of beauty, Keats began Endymion. But that single statement was not enough for this lover of Beauty. He declared,

Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
I, 2-5

The poet expressed in these haunting lines his poetic creed. He was saying that what is beautiful in one age remains for all ages, and that true happiness consists in being able to perceive this eternal beauty. A search for beauty overruled every other consideration in the mind of Keats. He affirmed that in meditation on thoughts of immortal beauty the poetic soul might repose in tranquillity and well-being.

Therefore, on every morrow are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching. . . .
I, 6-11

Not all that he saw would encourage the serenity which the contemplation of beauty invoked. Keats' temperament had acquainted him with despondency. There had been faltering hours of darkness and self-doubt. When evils such as discouragement and the dearth of noble natures upon this earth pressed upon him, he believed gloom might be driven out by beauty.

> . . .Yes, in spite of all,
> Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
> From our dark spirits. . . .
> I, 11-13

Through "searching" he had found an escape, and the way of escape lay along the pathway of natural beauties, "a flowery band."

Then the poet gathered into verse a lovely circlet of nature's beauties.

> . . . Such the sun, the moon,
> Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
> For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
> With the green world they live in; and clear rills
> That for themselves a cooling covert make
> 'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
> Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
> I, 13-19

These natural beauties, --sun, moon, trees, rills, flowers, --all are the very texture of the poem. They are the

"shapes of beauty" which dissolve the shade of gloom, and which make for health and quietude.

To this cluster of nature's beauties "made for our searching" he added another heart-stirring delight, his love of old stories and the chivalrous romances of great poets. The reader of this poem will find that many of the old stories, fables that were the inspiration of poets of other and older times, were used by the poet as he pursued his Endymion theme. We shall read of Arethusa and Alpheus, of Glaucus and Scylla, of Venus and Adonis, and of Circe and her enchantments. During imaginary journeys in dreams underground and beneath the sea the poetic imagination invested "the mighty dead" with new life. As Keats defined his purpose:

> And <u>such</u> too is the grandeur of the dooms
> We have imagined for the mighty dead;
> All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
> An endless fountain of immortal drink,
> Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.
> I, 20-24

The poet has not only stated his poetic creed, but also has given us the sources of his inspiration. The "flowery band" and "all lovely tales" are a "fountain of immortal drink." They feed his imagination and inspire his loftiest ideas.

The idea of continuous inspiration conveyed by Keats' phrase, "an endless fountain," is amplified in succeeding lines as he writes further of the stimuli to his imagination.

> Nor do we merely feel these essences
> For one short hour; no, even as the trees
> That whisper round a temple become soon
> Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
> The passion poesy, glories infinite,
> Haunt us till they become a cheering light
> Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
> That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
> They always must be with us, or we die.
> I, 25-33

Once again the sources of his poetic inspiration are particularized. He is haunted by the moon and the "passion poesy," which he says are "glories infinite." In the contemplation of these magical influences his thoughts will soar. Since these "essences" are so dear, they cheer him and sustain him. On their beauty he relies for life itself. The strength of his imaginative sympathies was so great that the mere telling of a poetic, romantic story gave him joy.

> Therefore, 't is with full happiness that I
> Will trace the story of Endymion.
> I, 34-35

The poet had said that the whispering trees about a temple

became as dear as the temple. It followed that his great love of ancient stories would be poured out in the telling of the story of Endymion. He would trace with happiness the poetic myth of the love story of Cynthia and Endymion.

> The very music of whose name has gone
> Into my being, and each pleasant scene
> Is growing fresh before me as the green
> Of our own vallies. . . .
> I, 36-39

Keats had brooded on this ancient myth until it had become a part of him, and he saw it as vividly as the actual English scene upon which his eyes rested.

In the spring when nature was bringing her domain to life and while he was away from the city, the poem would be written. Then the poet did an unusual thing; he set a time limit for his composition.

> . . . And as the year
> Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
> My little boat, for many quiet hours,
> With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
> Many a verse I hope to write,
> Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
> Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
> Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
> I must be near the middle of my story.
> . . . . . .
> . . . Let Autumn bold,
> With universal tinge of sober gold,
> Be all about me when I make an end.
> I, 45-53, 55-57

And now he is ready to enter upon a great adventure.

> . . . I send
> My herald thought into a wilderness:
> There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
> My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
> Easily onward, through flowers, and weed.
> I, 58-62

Of nothing was he sure. Thus Keats falteringly but courageously, had prepared himself to tell the story that "has gone into his very being."

In the Proem, only sixty lines, the reader finds all the elements of which Keats constructed the poem. The poet is aglow with love of beauty. Beauty in nature and in old stories, spiritualized, --"these essences" he writes, --bring him composure, health, and happiness. He feels in his soul the magic power of the moon to shed beauty over all. To escape the meanness of the world he seeks the loveliness of pure nature and rejoices in the beauty of the great tragic stories of the world. He proposes to himself to trace the story of Endymion with full happiness, and prepares to spend many quiet hours in pursuit of loveliness.

Against the background of a moonlit English landscape the eager imagination of a young poet re-enacted the old myth of the loves of the moon goddess and Endymion. He takes us first to a mighty Latmian forest, a gloomy forest shunned by shepherds. Numerous paths led to a

glade in which stood a marble altar on a lawn strewn with

> . . . flowers budded newly; and the dew
> Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
> Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve.
> I, 91-93

It was dawn.

> All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
> A troop of little children garlanded;
> Who gathering round the altar, seem'd to pry
> Earnestly round as wishing to espy
> Some folk of holidays. . . .
> I, 109-13

Heralded by faint music, a procession of white clad devotees joyously moved towards the altar. Young damsels danced along, carrying white wicker baskets filled with "April's tender younglings." (138) They were followed by a crowd of shepherds trailing sheephooks, or playing flutes. It is seen that the poet began his story on a morning in April, in the very season in which he started the actual composition.

A Druidic priest,

> His aged head crowned with beechen wreath,
> I, 159

advanced "full soberly." There came another crowd of

shepherds singing, and then in a car drawn by "three steeds of dappled brown," stood a princely youth, evidently a person of renown among the throng. The shepherd prince appeared robust and accustomed to bear weapons.

> A smile was on his countenance: he seem'd,
> To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
> Of idleness in groves Elysian. . . .
> I, 175-77

There were some among the multitude, however, who could detect a hint of underlying grief. Oftentimes they noticed that the reins slipped through his hands. Then the spectators would sigh,

> And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
> Of logs piled solumnly. - Ah, well-a-day,
> Why should our young Endymion pine away?
> I, 182-84

The assembled worshippers encircled the altar. The "venerable priest" called upon the shepherds to pay their vows to Pan. He also prepared a sacrifice of sweets upon the shrine and poured a libation "in honour of the shepherd god." While the incense of burning spice arose, the whole multitude sang a choral hymn to the god. This purely pagan hymn has been much admired as a work of art. Amy Lowell, for instance, says it is "one of the finest things Keats

ever wrote."[1]

The first stanza of the hymn sings of the secretiveness of the forest depths wherein Pan dwells. There are beautiful melodious lines which represent Pan as one,

> Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
> Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
> And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
> The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
> I, 236-39

and which pray his pity in memory of "fair Syrinx." It closes with an invocation,

> . . . Hear us, great Pan.
> I, 246

That is the only time the god's name is pronounced in the hymn.

The mood of the second stanza is quiet and contented. The woodland spirit is pictured as a wanderer through the meadows in the spring evening. He is implored to bring to fruition all the bright promise of flowers and fruit. The emotion is increasing in the third stanza in which Pan is addressed as the ruler over every faun and satyr. The movement and the thought of the lines are both livelier.

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 344

The fauns and satyrs are sent to the ocean side,

> . . . To gather up all fancifullest shells
> For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells
> And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
> Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
> The while they pelt each other on the crown
> With silvery oak leaves, and fir cones brown.
> I, 271-76

Next the "great son of Dryope" is besought to protect the worshippers themselves from harm, especially from terror of the unknown.

> Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
> That come a swooning over hollow ground,
> And wither drearily on barren moors.
> I, 285-87

The thought has been steadily mounting in intensity. The final apostrophe ends in a great shout by the singing congregation; the lines simulate well the volume of sound. The entire stanza suggests the state of mind of the distrait young Endymion. Very probably it tells what is going on in the mind of the poet. He was alone and grappling with great thoughts, an effort which left him cold and despairing. The appeal was to a supernatural power to spread over all a touch of beauty, which would transform the earth anew. He sought to escape into a dream world. It was a mystical experience, "an unknown." The entire

stanza is quoted.

> Be still the unimaginable lodge
> For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
> That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
> Gives it a touch ethereal - a new birth:
> Be still a symbol of immensity;
> A firmament reflected in a sea;
> An element filling the space between;
> An unknown - but no more: we humbly screen
> With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
> And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
> Conjure thee to receive our humble Paean,
> Upon thy Mount Lycaean!
>
> I, 293-206

The next hundred lines are concerned mostly with the groups into which the multitude divided. Companies of youths and maidens began dancing. Afterwards as they sat in weariness upon the grass, they listened to old stories, or watched games of quoits and archery contests. All their play recalled the old myths, perhaps stories of Niobe or the Argonauts. Even in the presence of youthful jollity, Endymion sat apart with the ancient priest and the aged shepherds, who soberly discoursed upon their anticipated heavenly duties and pleasures. As the elders talked of Elysium, each person told of his fond hope of a reunion with a lost love, a rosy child, or a friend of long ago, -- all but Endymion. He had fallen into a trance. The startled company were tearful or anxious and

tried to arouse Endymion, but he continued in a faint brought on by recollections of something in the past which he had concealed from all about him.

While Endymion was lost in melancholy dreams, he heard the voice of his sister Peona, who persuaded him to come with her and led him away through thickets and over rough ground

> Along a path between two little streams,
> I, 415

to a river,

> . . .Clear, brimful, and flush
> With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.
> I, 421-22

A small boat afloat in the stream bore them to an island. Peona induced Endymion to rest on her own couch of flower leaves. As he slept, Peona, holding his hand, sat quietly beside him.

This quiet scene is followed by an invocation to sleep. It is a passage of splendid, confused visions bathed in moonlight. Endymion awoke refreshed; Peona's sisterly affection had restored him. He was very grateful and vowed he would grieve no more, but would hunt upon the mountains as of old. At his request she accompanied

herself with the lute in a song,

> More subtly cadenced, more forest wild
> Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
> And nothing since has floated in the air
> So mournful strange. . . .
>
> I, 494-97

Rather than sing, she resolved to question him. It is vain to hide, she says, that he knows something mysterious. Has he offended the goddess? Has he shot a Paphian dove, wounded one of Diana's deer-herds, or caught a glimpse of Diana herself when he knew that would bring death to a mortal?

Endymion realizing that Peona too was troubled by the sudden change in him, assured her it was not unsatisfied ambition which had brought his spirits low. He made several puerile boasts about his hunting. He could race with his own steed, and with a frown could force a lion to slink backward. However, he did resolve to unburden himself of his "secret grief" to Peona. Thereupon he told a most strange story. On an evening as he walked in a forest near the river, suddenly a bed of ditamy and poppies burst into bloom beside him. As he wondered over this "flowery spell," he became dizzied with thought. He was surrounded with visions of light, very similar to the confusion of images in the invocation to sleep, and

overcome by these visions, he had fallen asleep. It is remarkable how much akin to a modern design is this vision of Keats. It is described as,

> Shaping visions all about my sight
> Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
> The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
> And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim.
> I, 568-71

He fell under an enchantment. Dreaming, he lay watching the stars. It would be impossible for him to express the beauty of all he "beheld and felt." Keats' attempt to reach the bounds of thought in these poetic visions is nearly always expressed by a soaring into the empyrean. So now as he gazed upward in this dream, the very doors of heaven seemed to open for his flight. An accompaniment of these mystical experiences which he usually mentions is the pinions which support him;

> So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
> Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
> I, 585-86

Presently in the vision he saw that the stars began to faint away. As they faded, his eyes dropped to the horizon and he saw emerge from opening clouds,

> The loveliest moon, that e'er silver'd o'er
> A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar
> So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
> Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
> Through clear and cloudy, even when she went

> At last into a dark and vapoury tent -
> Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
> Of planets all were in the blue again.
> I, 592-99

Again he lifted his eyes, and saw coming towards him an apparition of incomparable beauty. It did not occur to him to recognize the moon-goddess who came sailing from above and pressed his hand. He related that in this "dream within dream," as Peona described the enchantment, he fainted. He and the goddess sailed together to aereal heights, and then swooped downward to a cavern on a mountain side. They alighted on a bed of fragrant violets and blossoming limes. The story became more complex, for sleep overpowered him, and the sweet dream vanished. He was now in his first sleep.

From that sleep he awoke to deep despondency. The poppies hung wilted on their stems. The beautiful goddess had departed. It seemed to him that the breeze at intervals brought him

> Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus!
> I, 690

From this point onward Endymion was the lonely wanderer, seeking his high vision. The poetic soul having tasted Beauty for one brief moment will forever pine for beauty, and must pursue the quest through unimaginable adventures

and can not cease its search.

Peona would have comforted Endymion; but, her views being human, she thought it would be unmanly for him to search for the dream which had eluded him and spend his days in yearning for fitful visions.

> . . . How light
> Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight
> Than the mere nothing that engenders them!
> Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
> Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
> I, 754-58

Endymion defended his course. Had he not ever kept before himself high goals? Nothing base could entice him, nor could the failures of others deter him. He asked and answered a question,

> Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
> Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence; till we shine
> Full alchemiz'd, and free of space.
> I, 777-80

This is the beginning of a philosophical discourse comprising some two hundred lines. The entire passage must have had great importance to Keats who commented upon the lines quoted above, to his publisher, John Taylor. "My having written that Argument," wrote Keats, "will perhaps be of the greatest Service to me of anything I ever did. It set before me at once the gradations of Happiness even

like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer."[1]

Much of this long passage is very beautiful poetry. Since Keats thought of his explanations to Peona as being "gradations of Happiness," it is perhaps best to examine these lines in the light of the poet's judgment, to select, as it were, the steps towards happiness. "Fellowship divine" is synonymous with the poetic vision. Referring in the Proem to the power exerted over his dreams by the beauty he found in nature and old romances, Keats used the term "essences." At the moment when he arrived at a "fellowship with essence," he had escaped the world and was through the poetic vision one with the spirit of beauty. He declared his adventures in thought changed him into a glorious being who soared to the very heavens, "free of space." He implied that the mind of the poet had merged itself imaginatively with the infinite.

Immediately the reader is told what it is that "becks our ready minds" to these flights of happiness. First, as in the Proem, nature is declared to be the inspiration; and next in most plaintive, haunting lines, old songs and nyths are said to be the inspirers of poetic dreams.

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 91

> . . . Behold
> The clear religion of heaven! Fold
> A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
> And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress
> Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds
> And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
> Aeolian music from their lucid wombs:
> Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
> Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
> Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
> Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
> Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
> Where long ago a giant battle was;
> And from the turf a lullaby doth pass
> In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
> I, 780-94

The argument at this point recurs to Keats' conception of ultimate Beauty. Here he asks,

> Feel we these things? . . .

The continuation,

> . . . That moment have we stept
> Into a sort of oneness, and our state
> Is like a floating spirit's, . . .
> I, 795-97

expresses his belief that man is united with Beauty through an ecstatic appreciation of the loveliness of nature mingled with a rapturous sympathy for the beauty of history and legend. This is a state of complete detachment from the world of actuality.

Next he attains "richer entanglements," which lead to the "chief intensity."

> . . . The crown of these
> Is made of love and friendship; and sits high
> Upon the forehead of humanity.
> I, 800-2

Doubtless the poet feels the need for sympathy with humanity. But at this time his aspiration is to attain the sublime. Keats affirms that the beauty of love is the highest good any man can know.

> All its more ponderous and bulky worth
> Is friendship, whence ever issues forth
> A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
> There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
> Of <u>light</u>, and that is <u>love</u>. . . .
> I, 803-7

Soon the poet returns to the thought of a union with love, which is beauty to him, as imparting the greatest satisfaction.

> Melting into its radiance, we blend
> Mingle, and <u>so become a part of it</u>, -
> Not with aught else can our souls interknit
> So wingedly! . . .
> I, 810-13

He has reached the highest inspiration. His very being, as he aspired, has seen absolute beauty in love, and has "become a part of it."

Speaking now of sensual love the poet recognized that many men who might have been supremely great, have

been content to "sleep in love's elysium." Nevertheless, he writes,

> I have ever thought that it might bless
> The world with benefits unknowingly;
> As doth the nightingale, upperched high,
> And cloistered among cool and bunched leaves -
> She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
> How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-gray hood.
> I, 826-31

This passage of such importance in the poet's estimation closes with a note of the uncertainty which he deplored. He does not know what benefits love bestows upon the world.

> Just so may love. . .
> . . . . . .
> Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
> What I know not:. . .
> I, 832, 834-35

Finally he questioned Peona: If a man will give up his dearest ambition for a mortal love, how much more would he do for an immortal love?

Endymion struggled to convince the practical-minded Peona that his love was immortal and his dream real. He returned to memories of their childhood and related experiences that he now understood were intimations of his poetic visions. In one such memory he recalled himself, a

little boy in a secluded spot in a forest, playing by the water. He was idly blowing bubbles and sailing his little boats. The little boy had fancied himself Neptune ruling his tiny ocean. He grew older. Once as he had sat watching the reflection of overhead clouds in the water, there flew by

> A cloudy Cupid with his bow and quiver
> I, 889

He would have followed the little love, but was stopped by the sight of a face reflected in the water, the face of the divinity that appeared in his vision.

From childhood he had had moments of visionary delight. The poetic vision always was followed by weary days. The momentary enchantment came again and again. In the intervals he had sought to banish torment and had played about like a little boy, carelessly hurling his lance, and once had wandered aimlessly into a cave. There he found a spot so secluded and so beautiful, he had fancied it was a "grot of Prosprpine" or "the cell of Echo." Even there his hopes of meeting his love were blasted. A voice had warned,

> Endymion! the cave is secreter
> Than the isle of Delos. . . .
> I, 965-6

Continued disappointment in his searching caused him to resolve to spend his hours in meditation. In concluding the account of his experiences, Endymion gave Peona a half-hearted promise that he would grieve no more, nor wander about in the blustering mountain wind.

Evening had fallen. The narrative of an April day which began with the sacrifice on Mount Latmos and had been carried on against a background of rivers and spring flowers, ended as Peona and Endymion stepped into the boat and launched from land.

As we have seen, Book One opens with an Introduction of sixty-two lines which in itself summarized all the elements of the poet's thought at the time of his writing Endymion. Since the first thirty-three lines contain Keats' analysis of Beauty formulated at the beginning of his long task of composition, that half of the Introduction is the more important for a student of the poem. These lines contain a general statement,

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
> I, 1

developed by particulars; and a second,

> Nor do we merely feel these essences
> For one short hour, . . .
> I, 25-6

intended to strengthen the former. Through them we learn that the first quality Keats believed beauty to possess was permanency. As a consequence, appreciation of beauty could increase. (2) Repose was the reward won by lovers of beauty. (3-5) Beauty was synonymous with love of flowers and all other objects of nature, with love of legends and "all lovely tales." (13-24) The love of beauty must be idealized, carried into a world of the imagination--"these essences." (25-6) The types of beauty, therefore, from which might be invoked the highest inspiration on account of their being more ethereal, were the moon and poetry, "glories infinite," which shed "a cheering light." (28-30) The love of beauty guided and cheered; upon it the soul must place its dependence for continued life, for immortality. (32-33)

It is, as I have said, important to realize the qualities which the poet sought in his search for Beauty. Beauty, he defined, as an enduring and essential principle, productive of repose, experienced in degrees through love of nature, books, and -- more etherealized -- the moon and poetry. The poet who seems to the casual reader to be enamoured of merely sensuous beauty was seeking a general statement of a principle to guide him. What appears at

first reading to be purely sensuous was meant also to be philosophical. Many times in the poem may be seen the reaching upward for inspiration ever higher, the longing for repose, and the return to the moon as the symbol of spiritual beauty.

Book One has presented a full realization of sensuous beauty. Through Endymion's dreams Keats emphasized the influence of the moon that shed a glory over all. The book, which is uneven in poetic power, contains the Hymn to Pan, the moon pictures, and other passages of great lyric beauty. The poetic thought of beauty in quiet, secret places in the Hymn passed into the beauty of the mysterious and then into the beauty of thought too ethereal to be expressed. A second passage of extreme importance, the Gradations of Happiness passage (777-842), set forth the deepest thinking of which Keats was capable at the time he was writing. I shall refer again to my exposition of this passage. It really contains the "argument" of the poem, and critics can not ignore it.

The analysis of the first book has shown a similarity with the interpretations of Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney, both of whom found in Endymion an allegory.[1] According to these critics the intent of the

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1. See above, p. 17

poet to write an allegory is explained through the Gradations of Happiness passage. (777-842) These are, also, the lines which J. Middleton Murry found "of little importance."[1] The analysis agrees with the judgment of Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney in this respect. Professor Thorpe wrote that Book One "represents the first wild taste of sensuous beauty--the trance-like state."[2] On pages 57 and 58 is pointed out Endymion's mystical experience, a poetic vision, in which he was for an instant one with the spirit of beauty. He, also, explained to Peona that in former years he had had intimations of beauty which he had hoped to repeat.

Professor Finney interprets this book as the first gradation in a quest for immortality progressing through love of nature.[3] That opinion seems too limited. It is not love of nature alone, since the beautiful descriptions of natural scenes are only the background for the vision of the heavenly goddess. The culmination of the experiences related in the first book must be the meeting with the goddess (145-71), who thenceforward represented supreme beauty to Endymion. I agree with Professor Finney that Endymion's experiences represent a quest for immortality.[4]

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1. See above, p. 18
2. See above, p. 17
3. See above, p. 17
4. See above, p. 66

Book One, then, represents a full realization of sensuous beauty, the first step in a quest for immortality to be won through love.

This book might be judged weak in narrative power. It will be read, however, for the lovely lyrical portions scattered through its one thousand lines of verse. A clear cut contrast between the practical and helpful Peona representing human affection, and the illusive unknown goddess representing poetic inspiration is felt. It is to the latter Endymion cleaves, and with whom he hopes to be reunited. There is magic in the first book of Endymion; there is poetry. One does not forget that a lover of beauty had set out to prove his right to the high name of poet.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF BOOK TWO

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A succinct and arresting apostrophe,

> O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm!
> II, 1

acquaints us at once with the theme of the second book of Endymion. It expresses what was in the poet's mind at the time of writing, and illuminates the story.

> All records saving thine come cool and calm,
> And shadowy through the mist of passed years.
> For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
> Have become indolent. . . .
> II, 2-5

History can be read by this poet without emotion, for time has blurred all feeling; but not so stories of love.

> . . . But touching thine,
> One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
> One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.
> II, 5-7

With its magic touch love brings to life romantic tales. Such an intuitive picture as Keats draws of the fall of Troy,

> The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,
> Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
> Struggling, and blood, and shrieks, . . .
> II, 8-10

may be erased by a sharply defined etching of an immortal love story whose grief the poet shares.

> Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
> The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
> II, 12-13

He casts out of his thought history, with all its memories of proud and cruel happenings, the deeds of conquerors that strode across the pages of time and left no trace.

> . . . What care, though owl did fly
> About the great Athenian admiral's mast?
> What care, though striding Alexander past
> The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
> II, 22-25

In what way can these stories affect him now? They are lifeless happenings which could never provoke a sigh nor a sympathetic tear.

> . . . Juliet leaning
> Amid her window flowers, - sighing, - weaning
> Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
> Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
> Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
> Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
> Are things to brood on with more ardency
> Than the death day of empires. . . .
> II, 27-34

In truth, Keats had been brooding a long time on the works of Shakespeare and Spenser. To a great extent,

his imagination was fired with the power of love. In the introduction to the first book he had recited "all lovely tales" as a thing fittest to fill the soul and inspire the songs of a poet. He had written in Book I, 812-14, of the influence of love,

> Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
> So wingedly: when we combine therewith,
> Life's self is nourished by its proper pith.

Now he takes up this theme of human love which

> . . . brings honey-dew from buried days.
> II, 7

"Keats meant the love of man for woman, as being both his physical and spiritual fulfillment."[1]

Although he is enraptured with his subject, he approaches it with fear. He was not sure of himself.

> . . . Fearfully
> Must such conviction come upon his head,
> Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
> Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
> The path of love and poesy. . . .
> II, 34-38

Undaunted, he continues,

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 365

> . . . But rest
> In chaffing idleness is yet more drear
> Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear
> Love's standards on the battlements of song,
> So once more days and nights aid me along
> Like legion'd soldiers. . . .
> II, 38-43

We set out with the hero upon the adventures that awaited him. In spite of Endymion's promise to Peona on the evening in April, he still moped and wandered about the forest. One day in summer (74) "the brain-sick shepherd prince" sat by a spring dabbling his fingers in the cool water. Idly he plucked a wild rose and dipped its stalk in the water. The flower burst into full bloom, and there within its center nestled a golden butterfly upon whose wings Endymion seemed to see strange characters. The butterfly opened its wings and flew away. The wanderer awoke from his languid state, and eagerly followed it along dark paths, between cliffs and on even into a spring near a cavern's mouth.

The pursuit is described in lines so lucid that the picture is unforgettable.

> . . . One tract unseams
> A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
> Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
> He sinks adown a solitary glen,
> Where there was never sound of mortal men,
> Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences

> Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
> Some holy bark lets forth an anthem sweet,
> To cheer itself to Delphi. . . .
> II, 74-82

Endymion's swift feet could not overtake his "merry-winged guide." (83) As it reached the fountain, he saw it touch the water, and disappear. Failing to find his guide even when he searched the flowers, Endymion threw himself upon the grass.

Instantly a nymph arose in the water. She was plaintive and pitiful. All she could give to him who had too long

> . . . Starved on the ruth,
> The bitterness of love, . . .
> II, 104-5

was pity. It was not possible for her to cheer him. To do this kind office she would willingly have given all her treasures, her enchantments of the world under water. He learned that although the Naiad had guided him thus far, the search must continue into an unknown world of the imagination before he could be united with his goddess. He is told by the water nymph,

> "Thou must wander far
> In other regions, past the scanty bar
> To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en
> From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
> Into the gentle bosom of thy love."
> II, 123-27

One may think that here he is glimpsing the poet's mind, and not alone viewing the path of Endymion's adventures. The poet is assuredly conscious of a tremendous reaching for the stars. Endymion had told Peona happiness lay in

> A fellowship with essence; till we shine
> Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. . . .[1]

And now the Naiad had declared his soul would not be satisfied until he had wandered in a world of spirit. In such a region of dreams he would be taken "into the gentle bosom of his love." The mystery, the unattainable he sought, could not be understood by "a poor Naiad." She sank from sight into the water.

The lonely wanderer gazed upon the place of the nymph's disappearance in amazement, but the water poured on as if "neither good nor ill" had happened there. The hours of daylight had departed as he followed his elusive guide. In the twilight Endymion sat confused "by smothering fancies," while he poured out his heart in a long soliloquy on the vanity of human life, and the multitude of disappointed hopes. He told himself one struggle in a mortal's experience merely leads to another effort more arduous. The Latmian

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1. See above, p. 59

too understood the bitterness of disappointment since he had pursued an airy guide unhesitatingly, only to see it undergo a change and vanish from his life. A man

> . . . encamps
> To take a fancied city of delight,
> O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
> After long toil and traveling, to miss
> The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:
> . . . . . .
> Another city doth he set about.
> II, 142-46, 148

Dejected, he

> . . . onward to another city speeds,
> But this is human life. . . .
> II, 152-53

This repetition is the ebb and flow of Keats' own misgivings about his poetical efforts. Yet growth, he feels, comes through struggles which bear in themselves,

> . . . This good
> That they are still the air, the subtle food
> To make us feel existence, and to show
> How quiet death is. . . .
> II, 156-59

It is still the poet speaking for himself who says,

> . . . Where soil is men grow,
> Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
> There is no depth to strike in, . . .
> II, 159-61

a pathetic admission of his inexperience. The succeeding

lines,

> . . . I can see
> Naught earthly worth my compassing; so stand
> Upon a misty, jutting head of land,
> II, 161-63

are an instance of Keats' ability to impart a sense of vastness and mystery.

> Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute
> When mad Eurydice is listening to 't;
> I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
> With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek
> But the soft-shadow of my thrice-seen love,
> Than be - I care not what. . . .
> II, 164-69

In his utmost need, Endymion implored the moon-goddess to give him wings to bear him to "his love's far dwelling." He prayed the virgin goddess to be propitious. He felt himself bursting the bars of his mortality, and believed he was sailing with the goddess through the air. To sail through the ether and see the world spinning below was more than his spirit could bear. He called to the goddess to aid him. As he stood trembling, a voice from the cave called to him to descend

> Into the sparry hollows of the world!
> II, 204

Lest he hesitate, he was told,

> . . . He ne'er is crown'd
> With immortality, who fears to follow
> Where airy voices lead. . . .
> II, 211-13

Keats seemed to believe that a poetic flight of the imagination into a dream world where he could detach himself from the world of reality was necessary to free him from earthly limitations. When Endymion was enjoined to descend into "the silent mysteries of the earth," (214) without an instant's pause for reflection, he plunged into "the fearful deep."

> Now that he had fled
>
> From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.
> II, 218

the solitary prince found himself in a strange, twilight world faintly glimmering with millions of sparkling gems. It is a strange and wonderful experience to run away from the radiance of a full moon, and find in the depths of the earth such a region as that Endymion saw.

> . . . Dark, nor light
> The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
> But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
> A dusky empire and its diadems;
> One faint eternal eventide of gems.
> II, 221-25

The most exuberant poetic fancy was here working. A vein

of gold studded with jewels served Endymion for a path, and led under arched roofs, through sapphire columns, and across fantastic bridges to a ridge that towered over a hundred waterfalls. The poet is trying to grasp, or to convey an illusive sense of a vastness which is a part of the poetic vision when he is freed of earthly limitations.

> . . . On a ridge
> Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
> Towers like an ocean cliff, and whence he seeth
> A hundred waterfalls; whose voices come
> But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
> His bosom grew, when first he, far away
> Descried an orbed diamond. . . .
> II, 239-45

Led by the diamond sun, Endymion went on and on, too absorbed to see even greater wonders:

> . . . past the wit
> Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
> Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,
> Will be its high remembrancers; who they?
> The mighty ones[1] who have made eternal day
> For Greece and England. . . .
> II, 249-54

He was filled with astonishment. At last he passed through a marble gallery and entered a "mimic temple" enclosing a shrine to Diana. He long explored these mysteries alone in

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1. Claude Lee Finney identifies "The mighty ones" with "Keats' Renaissance masters; Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, and Milton." (The Evolution of Keats' Poetry, p. 249)

dead silence until weary with wandering he seated himself before

> . . . A wild outlet, fathomless and dim,
> To wild uncertainty and shadows dim.
> II, 272-73

Again he related the confusion and uncertainty of his awakening from his dream, his high imaginative experience.

Consciousness brought to Endymion the sting of solitude. He asked himself why he should grieve in solitude deprived of the beauties of earth. He was not satisfied to draw, in discontent, "fantastic figures with his spear." (294) He retraced his way to the temple, and there at the shrine besought Diana to return him to the earth.

> . . . O Haunter chaste
> Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
> Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
> Are thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
> What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos?
> Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
> Of thy disparted nymphs? Through what dark tree
> Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,
> 'Tis in the breath of heaven; thou dost taste
> Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
> Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
> But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
> There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
> It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
> An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
> Within my breast there lives a choking flame-
> O let me cool't the zephyr-boughs among!
> A homeward fever parches up my tongue-
> O let me slake it at the running springs!
> Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings-
> O let me once more hear the linnet's note!
> . . . . . .

Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep.
II, 302-22, 331-32

There came no sound in reply. Poor Endymion, completely discouraged, bowed his head. It was not for long. Flowers and leaves burst through the marble floor beside him. Heartened by such a token of the goddess' favor, he anxiously pursued his way. He had asked to see his native bowers, and here in this underground world the flowers he yearned to see had appeared before him. The fairy journey continued. Faint music charmed him, and awoke longings for his lost love. He was led by a light to a bower of sleeping cupids, and through a maze to a "myrtle-walled" chamber in which lay the youth Adonis, asleep, surrounded with flowers and ministered to by a band of cupids.

Endymion would have asked for an explanation, but he was forestalled by a cupid who assured him that he had been granted the highest favor of the gods, since he had been permitted to enter a sacred bower. After offering a banquet to Endymion prepared for him alone, a cupid then proceeded to relate the story of Venus and Adonis, adding to the familiar myth that Venus had pleaded with Jove to restore Adonis to her arms, and that Jove had decreed that Adonis' sleep should endure only through the winter.

Endymion learned that Venus was momentarily expected to visit her love.

> . . . And fast
> She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through
> The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
> Embower'd sports in Cytherea isle.
> II, 489-92

A song from the air awakened the sleeping cupids who roused themselves and rubbed their eyes. Far aloft appeared the dove-drawn car which approached swiftly. It was Venus returning to visit Adonis.

The first embraces were scarcely over before Endymion sought the assistance of the goddess in his quest. Venus spoke first to Adonis, and then to Endymion. She had known of Endymion's misery, and had pitied him.

> I saw this youth as he despairing stood:
> Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind;
> Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
> Over his sullen eyes. . . .
> II, 561-64

In this despairing youth Keats drew himself. Having heard his wild complaints, Venus had guessed some goddess, she knew not who, had condescended to him. Since concealment was necessary she would not take him away to Olympus. Venus and Adonis departed;

> When all was darkened, with Aetnean throe
> The earth clos'd, . . .
> II, 585-86

and Endymion was left alone.

As Endymion wandered on he was not unhappy. Had not Venus assured him of the truth of his vision? He had loved an immortal, and he could look forward to future happiness. His wanderings took him through caves and palaces of many colored stones. This description of "wild magnificence" (598) is day dreaming in extreme. These palaces had

> Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,
> Black polish'd porticoes of awful shade,
> And at the last, a diamond balustrade
> Leading afar past wild magnificence.
> II, 595-98

There is an inextricable succession of diamond balustrade "stretching across a void" (600) and bridging enormous chasms in which subterranean streams foamed and roared. Playfully he dashed the waters with his spear. At once the water rose in columns and enclosed his path. They surrounded him with coolness and music.

The phantasmagoria of interlacing waters unfolded,

> Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
> Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees
> Moving about as in a gentle wind,
> Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
> Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
> Spangled and rich with liquid broideries
> Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.
> II, 614-20

The waters resolved them into the form of a cathedral, and at last Endymion reluctantly turned away.

The solitary wanderer felt the chill of something dreary and mysterious. At that moment occurred one of the strangest incidents in this dim underworld of the imagination. It was the sight of the earth-mother Cybele, in her somber chariot drawn by the team of lions, silently sailing from "rugged arch" to another "gloomy arch" in "the dusk below." This seems to me to be the most dramatic, certainly the most unexpected, and startling incident thus far. It is a splendid description, ghostly and solemn.

> Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
> Came mother Cybele! alone - alone -
> In somber chariot; dark foldings thrown
> About her majesty, and front death pale,
> With turrets crowned. Four maned lions hale
> The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,
> Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
> Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
> Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
> This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
> In another gloomy arch:- . . .
> II, 639-49

Surely this is the apotheosis of day dreaming.

The "young traveler," wayworn and "lost in middle air," called to Jupiter. And well he might, for the diamond path ended abruptly in mid-air. Jove answered his prayer for rescue, and an eagle appeared flying towards him. Endymion flung himself between the eagle's wings, and they sank down-down-down through the perfumed air to a green nook sweet with flowers, leaves, and mosses. All this, remember, was underground.

The eagle landed him in a moss-covered bower. The wanderer's every sense was attuned to pleasure. His senses were of more than mortal insight. For instance, his ears were capable of hearing in a period of silence the music of the spheres. Nature also was in tune with him. The flowers responded to his sighs and stirred. In this mood of pleasant anticipation he wandered on, disturbed by one thought only. Will solitude snatch away this inexplicable happiness? His thought turned to his unknown love, she whom he sought.

> . . . Art a maid of the waters,
> One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?
> Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
> Weaving a coronal of tender scions
> For very idleness? . . .
>
> II, 690-94

He would force his way to her, if it were possible to find her. Since this could not be, he proposed to seek her in a dream.

Forthwith searching through a dim passage, he found "the smoothest mossy bed," (710) and threw himself down. Endymion stretched his arms into the air, and

> . . . took, O bliss!
> A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?"
> A well-known voice sighed, "Sweetest, here am I!"
> II, 712-14

Here follows a description of the impassioned love union with Cynthia, in disguise. The young poet realized it would take a master hand to write such a passage, but inexperience in writing did not restrain his pen. He said as much;

> . . . Helicon!
> O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
> That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er
> These sorry pages, then the verse would soar
> And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
> Over his nested young; but all is dark
> Around thine aged top . . .
> . . . Aye, the count
> Of mighty poets is made up; the scroll
> Is folded by the Muses. . . .
> II, 716-22, 723-25

As described by the poet this is a scene of sensual

love. Though lacking "a quill immortal" for which he sighed, Keats related the endearments of Endymion and his unknown love.

> These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
> That there is no old power left to steep
> A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
> Long time ere silence did their anxious fears
> Question that thus it was; long time they lay
> Fondling and kissing every doubt away;
> Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
> To mellow into words, and then there ran
> Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.
> "O known Unknown! from whom my being sips
> Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
> Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot
> Pillow my chin forever? ever press
> These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess?
> Why not for ever and for ever feel
> That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal
> Away from me again, indeed, indeed -
> Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
> My lonely madness. Speak, delicious fair!
> Is - is it to be so? No! who will dare
> To pluck thee from me? And of thine own will,
> Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . Elysium! who art thou?
> Who, that thou canst not be forever here,
> Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere."
> II, 730-51, 753-55

In this way Keats is symbolizing for himself the union of the poetic soul with sensuous beauty.

In answer to his pleas the goddess would not reveal her identity, but would only say,

> . . ."Yet must I hence:
> Yet can I not to starry eminence
> Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own
> Myself to thee." . . .
> II, 776-79

In spite of her fear of discovery on "Olympus' solemn height," (784) with a kiss she vowed

> . . ."an endless bliss,
> An immortality of passion's thine;"
> II, 807-8

and she promised the poet even while she complained of the "roughness of mortal speech,"

> "Lispings empyrean will I sometimes teach
> Thine honied tongue - lute-breathings, which I gasp
> To have thee understand, now while I clasp
> Thee thus, and weep for fondness - I am pain'd,
> Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
> In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"
> Hereat with many sobs, her gentle strife
> Melted into a languor. He return'd
> Entranced vows and tears. . . .
> II, 819-27

The phrase, "dearth of human words," (817) indicates that Keats felt his language was unequal to the strain put it in depicting this love scene. In line 740 occurs the word "essence," which Keats uses only of the ideal, the final sublimation.[1] His using this word "essence" is, I think, significant of the poet's sincerity and his belief

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1. Book One, 777-8, states that "a fellowship divine" and "a fellowship with essence" are synonymous

in the power of love to set the spirit free. The divinity whose identity was unrevealed once more disappeared. To many readers this long scene will appear in poor taste. His very youth and inexperience are probably responsible for what may be objectionable. If writing this scene were a flaw in his art, as critics declare it is, the poet redeemed himself in the magical lines which followed:

> . . . Ye who have yearned
> With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
> For the mere sake of truth; as 't is a ditty
> Not of these days, but long ago 't was told
> By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
> And then the forest told it in a dream
> To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
> A poet caught as he was journeying
> To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling
> His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
> And after, straight in that inspired space,
> He sang the story up into the air,
> Giving it universal freedom. . . .
>
> II, 827-39

Once more Endymion slept. He awoke to loneliness and resumed with languid steps his wanderings. He "strayed about" until he entered a great, vaulted grotto full of sea treasures. There he sat down in "this cool wonder," (885) and began to go over in memory his past life. He reviewed his youth, the "look of his white palace," revels with his friends,

> . . . Then the spur
> Of the old bards to mighty deeds; his plans
> To nurse the golden age 'mongst shepherd clans
> That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival:
> His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all,
> Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd:
> Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
> High with excessive love. . . .
> II, 894-901

Endymion seemed to realize nothing would be the same with him again.

> Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
> All other depths are shallow: essences,
> Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
> Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
> And make my branches lift a golden fruit
> Into the bloom of heaven; other light,
> Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
> The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark.
> II, 904-11

The poet is saying that from the union with sensuous beauty has come new vision, new insight, new power.

It was a new insight. He now felt stirring within him a sympathy he had never known before. A distant murmur echoed his thoughts. His attention wholly aroused, he listened and then two streams burst from the rock beside him, one flowing, one pursuing. It was the fountain nymph, Arethusa, changed into a stream, fleeing the river-god, Alpheus. Endymion forgot his dream, and listened to the murmuring of the voices, one imploring, the other replying.

Arethusa longed to yield, but feared the wrath of the goddess Diana whom she served. It is irony to hear Alpheus plead,

> . . . "Fear no more,
> Sweet Arethusa! Diana's self must feel
> Sometimes these very pangs." . . .
> II, 983-85

To all his pleas, she answered

> "What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
> Severe before me: persecuting fate!
> Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late
> A huntress free in" - At this instant fell
> Those two streams adown a narrow dell.
> II, 1005-9

Endymion heard no more than the echo of "Arethusa" floating back to him. For the first time the Latmian showed compassion for the sorrows of others. He wept in pity, and prayed to Diana to be indulgent with her nymph.

Again he slept. In a dream he moved in the direction of a cooler light

> . . . And lo!
> More suddenly than doth a moment go
> The visions of the earth were gone and fled -
> He saw the giant sea above his head.
> II, 1020-23

The Second Book of Endymion marks an advance in narrative composition. The story which interprets the

power of sensual love in the search for Beauty to further the artist's growth and insight becomes more consecutive. Briefly, the shepherd prince was guided to a fountain whose presiding nymph warned him of a far journey he must take into other regions. The beauty of the moon overpowered him. In obedience to a heavenly voice he sank into an underworld of magnificence and of fantastic dreams. He was privileged to witness the meeting of Venus and Adonis, and was guided to a flowery bower where he was visited by his unknown love. After her departure, lost in thought he sat musing over his past until his abstraction was invaded by the whispers of Arethusa and Alpheus. He turned, fell into another dream, and this time descended beneath the sea. That this book does not contain so many stanzas of beautiful lyric poetry as are found in the first book is true; yet the awakening of Adonis, and the melodic recital of the myth, Arethusa and Alpheus, are embellishments.

More specifically, Endymion had set out upon a quest of eternal Beauty. Contentedly he had followed the leading of beauty. The bud which had become in turn the rose, the butterfly, and the nymph symbolized the fleeting beauty of the earth. The Naiad who had led him as far as she could, was able to tell him he must

> . . . wander far
> In other regions, past the scanty bar
> To mortal steps. . . .
> II, 123-25

Endymion began his second adventure in the consciousness of the futility of human life.

> But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
> The disappointment, the anxiety,
> Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
> All human. . . .
> II, 153-6

He was impatient with superficiality. This attitude was voiced in the wanderer's distressed cry,

> . . . but for me
> There is no depth to strike in; I can see
> Naught earthly worth my compassing.
> II, 160-62

In despair, he sent up a prayer to Cynthia, the symbol of ideal beauty, to

> . . . tie
> Large wings upon my shoulders. . . .
> II, 177-78

The ensuing vision lifted him above the world, and from that high view he was bidden to plunge into the "silent mysteries of the earth," (214) into reality. The "airy voices" which guided him in a state of ecstasy led him

into the "sparry hollows of the world." It was immortal beauty he was seeking, "to be crowned with immortality." (212)

Even there he met with disillusionment. Having traversed wonders impossible to describe, he was wearied and rested for a space. (271) Again he was overcome by the thought of the evanescence of beauty, his journey being described as a "mad pursuing of the fog-born elf" (276) which had cheated him of love. He called upon Cynthia to restore to him the first symbol of beauty, flowers, and then, refreshed, resumed his journey. His wandering steps paused when he entered the "immortal bowers" (438) of Adonis. Cheered by Venus' assurance he was being guided in his quest,

> Endymion! One day thou will be blest:
> So still obey the guiding hand that lends
> Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.
> II, 573-75

He went on until he underwent the psychological experience phrased in the Hymn to Pan as "solitary thinkings" (I, 294); baffled he sank deeper into the earth. The meeting with the goddess, his love, gave him no permanent happiness. But it had given him gentleness.

> The lyre of his soul Aeolian tun'd
> Forgot all violence, and but commun'd
> With melancholy thought. . . .
> II, 866-68

As was the case in the first book, the interpretation based on the analysis is similar to the allegorical interpretations of Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney. The former interprets the second book as showing "the poetic soul under the full dominion of sensuous beauty."[1] It is true this was a far deeper experience than was narrated in Book One.[2] Professor Thorpe also recognizes that the experience described awakened compassion in Endymion.[3] In these respects this critic's interpretation accords with the analysis.

Professor Finney interprets Book Two as the "neo-Platonic quest for immortality through the beauty of art."[4] I can not agree that the theme is the beauty of art. There is not sufficient evidence to support such an opinion. All that can be cited is a reference to great artists of the past (249-54) which occurs in the narrative at the beginning of Endymion's underground journey.[5] The fact that the region

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1. See above, p. 17
2. See above, p. 90
3. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, Op. Cit., p. 59
4. See above, p. 17
5. See above, p. 79

Endymion traverses is a world of the imagination might be thought to indicate art. Nevertheless, the passage quoted and the scene of an imaginary world are a very small part of the book. With half of this critic's interpretative statement, "a neo-Platonic quest for immortality," there is agreement. That it was a quest for immortality was plain.[1] Thus the analysis agrees in part with that of both critics.

The book portrays the second step in his ascent towards an ideal state. It was an experience more absorbing and more profound than Endymion had known before. The adventure had consumed an evening and a night in mid-summer. Endymion did not return to the earth, but wandered along a sandy path towards a cooler light. The scene of the book is an underworld, not terrible nor ghostly, but mysterious and strange. Controlled by the spell of the dream or vision, under which he had fallen in obedience to the heavenly voice, Endymion roamed through a world of incredible imaginings. He had fled from the light of the moon, (217-18) but there had been other lights to glimmer in this strange underworld, the light struck from sparkling gems;

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1. See above, pp. 78 and 94

> One faint eternal eventide of gems.
> II, 225

Once the light was "an orbed diamond." (245) Except for Adonis' chamber, which was "full of light," (390) the glow was brightened only by sparkling gems;

> . . . and overhead
> A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
> With starlight gems. . . .
> II, 630-32

In this dim half-world of light his vision revealed the union of his poetic aspiration with love, for the goddess, the beauty he sought, visited him in this strange region. His moodiness after her departure was rebuked when he heard the murmuring voices of the river god and Arethusa. Their plight aroused in him the first sympathetic understanding of the woes of others. He was immediately seized by an illuminating dream and transported beneath the sea where a more complete revelation of the power of sympathy and friendship awaited him.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF BOOK THREE

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The introduction to the third book expresses in part (1-22) Keats' antipathy to a Tory government. England in 1817 was seething with unrest. The year before when the disruption of economic life following the Napoleonic Wars had been at its worst, there had been riots of farmers and miners. The government, however, enjoyed the advantage of an overwhelming military force of seasoned troops. Whereas soldiers had formerly been quartered in the villages in the homes of the people, they were in 1817 housed in barracks. This change in billeting had widened the gulf between the people and the ministry, and had given to the ministry more power. Keats wrote to Reynolds, his lawyer friend, April 18, 1817, that "On the road from Cowes to Newport I saw some extensive Barracks which disgusted me extremely with Government for placing such a Nest of Debauchery in so beautiful a place."[1]

Probably the ministers who had piloted the country to victory in the great wars were doing their best, but they were obsessed with fear of the foreigner and with

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 20

the triumph of Jacobin principles. An additional instance of their exercise in 1817 of dictatorial powers so obnoxious to Keats and his friends was the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Other enactments regarded by thousands as oppressive were thought to have been the work of the ministers, Sidmouth and Castlereagh,[1] who were detested by the Liberals. The latter thought of "the Tory ministers as selfish and cunning tyrants whose one object was to maintain themselves in power and luxury."[2]

Since Keats seldom expressed in his writings an interest in public affairs, a notation of his friend, Richard Woodhouse, commands attention. He recorded that Keats said, "It will be easily seen what I think of the present ministers by the beginning of the Third Book."[3] Notcutt who made a biographical interpretation of the allegory in Endymion, confronted with Woodhouse's statement, acknowledged that the "political reference was part

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1. These were Henry Addington Sidmouth, 1st Viscount, (1757-1844), and Robert Stewart, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry (1769-1822), known in history as Lord Castlereagh. The measures in question were the Sedition and Treason Acts passed originally in 1795 to prevent the disloyalty or treason of soldiers and sailors. The acts were revived in 1817 carrying instructions to magistrates to apprehend and hold to bail persons accused on oath of seditious libel.
2. Wingfield-Stratford, Esme, History of England, New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1928, vol. II, p. 890
3. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 389

at least of the poet's meaning,"[1] but he thought it had another purpose, "to express the strong disapproval that Keats felt for the poetry of the classical school." He commented, "When the passage (1-21) is read again in the light of this fact it becomes evident that all the terms employed will serve to express the poetical antipathies of Keats as well as the political antipathies of Leigh Hunt."[2]

A contrary opinion is expressed by Professor Thorpe who feels that Keats had a real interest in politics. He sees in the same lines (1-22) certain economic and social implications. "Even making all reservations for the young poet's possible desire here for something like a rhetorical contrast . . . there is just left in this passage evidence of vigorous, even revolutionary indignation at a blatantly illogical, social, political, and economic order."[3] Such are the diverse opinions upon this passage which contains the only comment Keats made in the entire poem upon the life of his time.

The issue, however, for the present-day reader is to discover how the poet made the transition from a denunciation of the politics of the day to the state of his hero

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1. Notcutt, H. Clement, Op. Cit., p. xxxiv
2. Ibid., p. xxxiv
3. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, Loc. Cit., p. 1241

"with the giant sea above his head," (II, 1023) where he was left at the close of the second book.

Keats made a good start in this book, for the first two lines are admirable as poetry:

> There are who lord it o'er their fellow men
> With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
> Their baaing vanities, to browse away
> The comfortable green and juicy hay
> From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
> Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
> Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
> Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. . . .
> III, 1-8

To a modern reader the lines immediately following which contain the figures of the nibbling sheep and the fire-branded foxes, are difficult. There is perhaps more indignation than clarity in the lines. Keats expressed his scorn of the Tory ministers with this slighting phrase, "their baaing vanities." To have one's hopes destroyed by those unable to appreciate them is a "torturing fact."

Keats further rebelled against the rule of those men who possessed no touch of inspiration, yet occupied the seats of power. He expressed a stinging contempt for royal oppressors:

> . . . With not one tinge
> Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
> Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
> By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
> And crowns, and turbans. . . .
> III, 8-12

With nothing save self-importance to commend them, they matched their pettiness only with their vain glory, when

> . . . With unladen breasts
> Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
> To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
> Their tip-top nothings, their dull skies, their thrones -
> Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
> Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
> And sudden cannon. . . .
> III, 12-18

It was hollow mockery, all of it, arousing unpleasant reflections upon those who ruled and ruined in the days of old tyrannies. To a quickened intelligence, a poet's for example, this shouting was,

> . . . Like uproar past and gone -
> Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,
> And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks -
> III, 19-21

This is like Keats; we recognize the hand that wrote those lines. Now that his thought was turning to the past, he was less bitter.

> Are then regalities all gilded masks?
> III, 22

No, replied the poet, there are genuine spiritual regalities. There are heights of power to be reached only through exalted

thought. There are poetical regalities,

> . . . ethereal things that unconfin'd,
> Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
> And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents
> To watch the abysm birth of elements.
> III, 25-28

In addition, there are many mysterious powers above the earth which control the elements,

> And, silent as a consecrated urn,
> Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
> III, 32-33

Although most of these powers are beyond human knowledge, a few

> Have bared their operations to this globe -
> Few who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
> Our piece of heaven--whose benevolence
> Shakes hands with our own Ceres. . . .
> III, 35-38

Soon the poet will show the reader a contrast between the tyranny of the earthly regalities, and the benevolence of the heavenly powers. Of these benevolent powers, the "gentlier-mightiest" was Diana. He had now approached his theme. Of those regalities which reveal themselves to men, to Keats the most beautiful thing in nature to which he had ever reacted emotionally, had always been the moon. It is of her gentleness he sings.

She unobserved steals unto her throne,
And there she sits most meek and most alone;
As if she had not pomp subservient;
As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;
As if the ministering stars kept not apart,
Waiting for silver footed messages.
III, 45-51

The magic of moonlight must speed him on his story.

Hereupon, Keats praises the moon in a strain of splendid nature poetry.

O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:
O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless everywhere with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine
Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine:
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;
And yet thy benediction passeth not
One obscure hiding place, one little spot
Where pleasure may be sent; the nested wren
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house. - the mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine -- the myriad sea!
IV, 52-69

In the last line occurs a dominating idea in the third book, that the moon's silvery light revives whatever it touches, its influence being felt into the depths of the ocean. By such a roundabout way has Keats arrived at his theme. The reader will soon find himself with Endymion

under the sea, where the wanderer will be ennobled through a generous act of human sympathy.

Possibly two weeks had elapsed since the Latmian had fled into the depths of the earth to escape the clear moon from her blue throne "now filling all the air." (II, 171) When the story was resumed, the melancholy prince searching for his love, was wrapped in sorrow.

> Cynthia! Where art thou now? What far abode
> Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
> Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine
> For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale
> For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail
> His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh?
> Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye.
> III, 72-78

The moon was a thin crescent far down in the west. Cynthia pining no less than Endymion was pale and changed.

> She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness
> Is seen on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress
> Of love-spangles just off yon cape of trees,
> Dancing upon the waves as if to please
> The curly foam with amorous influence.
> III, 81-85

The poet's vivid glance then followed the moonbeams in their course to the very depths of the sea.

> O love! how potent has thou been to teach
> Strange journeyings! . . .
> III, 92-3

Once more Keats declared that love in the person of Cynthia was the supernatural power that had taken Endymion on his wonderful journeys upon earth and underground. As he continued his searching, Love led him to all beauty wherever found, and won a victory for the poet who followed unhesitatingly to find at the last that love and beauty were synonymous.

> . . . Wherever beauty dwells,
> In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
> In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
> Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
> Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;
> Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;
> III, 93-98

It is not strange that a moon which had guided lovers in the old tales of Leander and Orpheus, at this place in the story should be leading Endymion in his search for beauty. The poet now took up the story of Endymion's search.

The moon pining for Endymion had sent a shaft into the sea seeking him. The moonbeams falling upon Endymion's face as he lay asleep under the water into which he had plunged just after the disappearance of Arethusa and Alpheus, awoke him. But he again laid his head upon a tuft of seaweeds where the moonbeams cast their light upon him and slept until morning. He was "half-entranced" with love's spell. When morning came,

> He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
> Along his fated way. . . .
> III, 118-19

Under the mystical influence of the moon the poetic soul must explore another realm, this time an imaginary undersea world. Even in that strange place love is all-powerful.

Endymion roamed about on the ocean floor among shipwrecks, old weapons, art treasures, even "mouldering scrolls" which remind us once again that the poet in his Proem had affirmed his devotion to

> All lovely tales that we have heard or read.
> I, 22

Since the description of the ocean floor is strange, and shows Keats' preoccupation with old things, I quote it entire.

> . . . Far had he roamed
> With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,
> Above, around, and at his feet; save things
> More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:
> Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large
> Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;
> Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
> The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd
> With long-forgotten story, and wherein
> No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
> But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls,
> Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
> Who first were on the earth; and sculptures rude
> In ponderous stone; developing the mood
> Of ancient Nox; - then skeletons of man,
> Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,

> And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
> Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe
> These secrets struck into him. . . .
> III, 119-37

In the end he would have died awe-struck in the presence of these tokens of death and decay, had not Diana "chaced away that heaviness." (138)

The poet takes up the inexhaustible theme of the moon's praise, and recites in convincing and eloquent lines the story of the moon's influence over his own early years.

> What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move
> My heart so potently? When yet a child
> I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.
> Thou seem'dst my sister. . . .
> III, 142-45

The objects of nature which he had said were "shapes of beauty" meant to steal away a wanderer's care had become more beautiful under the moon's rays. The water, the woods, the blossoms, and airy melodies had become romantic under the witchery of the moon. As the poet grew in years, her glorifying power increased; she heightened the mystery and poetry of life.

> And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
> With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;
> Thou wast the mountain top - the sage's pen -
> The poet's harp - the voice of friends - the sun;
> Thou wast the river - thou wast glory won;
> Thou wast the clarion's blast - thou wast my steed -
> My goblet full of wine - my topmost deed:-

> Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!
> O what a wild and harmonized tune
> My spirit struck from all the beautiful!
> III, 162-71

May not the last two lines contain the essential to Keats' own poetic nature? Under the influence of the moon, the poetic inspiration was rhapsodic, and transmuting.

> On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
> Myself to immortality. . . .
> III, 172-73

Then the poet merged his personality in the hero's. As Endymion roamed about on the ocean floor, he prayed to his love. Endymion begged Diana's forgiveness for having let another love come between him and his former youthful worship of her. He seemed not to recognize Diana and the goddess whom he had embraced on the underground journey as the same. It appears he was talking first to Diana,

> . . . O be kind,
> Keep back thine influence and do not blind
> My sovereign vision; . . .
> III, 181-83

and then to the other,

> . . . Dearest love, forgive
> That I can think away from thee and live!
> III, 183-84

Addressing Diana again, he pleaded

> Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
> One thought beyond thine argent luxuries!
> III, 185-86

His confused prayers to the moon and his love were cut short as his attention was suddenly diverted. Far away in the green water he saw an old man seated "upon a weeded rock." He presented at first a repellent picture.

> His white hair was awful, and a mat
> Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet.
> III, 194-95

This old man was wrapped in a magic cloak of blue,

> O'er wrought with symbols by the deepest groans
> Of ambitious magic: every ocean form
> Was woven in with black distinctness; storm
> And calm,and whispering, and hideous roar,
> Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,
> Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape
> That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.
> III, 198-204

The "symbols" had magic power to dwindle or dilate at will. The reader is told,

> The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell,
> Yet look upon it, and 't would size and swell
> To its huge self; and the minutest fish
> Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish
> And show his little eye's anatomy.
> Then there was pictur'd the regality
> Of Neptune; and the sea nymphs round his state,
> In beauteous vassalage look up and wait.
> III, 205-12

The old man wrapped in the folds of his magic cloak sat with a pearly wand beside him and with a book in his lap.

So absorbed was the aged man in his book that for some time Endymion observed him with amazement. The old man seeing the stranger, arose decrepitly, and waved the stole with joy. Terrified, Endymion heard him announce,

> "Thou art the man! Now I shall lay my head
> In peace upon my watery pillow; now
> Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow."
> III, 234-36

Blessed he was, for now the old man said he would regain his youth, his joy, and his strength. Still Endymion could not endure the idea of being diverted from his quest for beauty, teased as he was with memories of his love tryst "some few days agone," (269) and he recoiled from "the mysterious old man." The rapturous dreams of his love were interrupted by desperate fear while in imagination he saw himself consigned to a horrible death by the dweller in the ocean. How young Endymion is! He expressed his resistance by looking "high defiance," (282) but

> . . . The grey-hair'd creature wept.
> III, 283

Endymion, newly-awakened to human sympathies, was

struck with remorse;

> Had he then wronged a heart where sorrow kept?
> Had he, though blindly contumelious brought
> Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought?
> III, 284-86

Kneeling, Endymion tearfully sought forgiveness. We are reminded of the passage in Book One in which the poet explained the "gradations of Happiness," and declared that there were "richer entanglements" than nature's beauty and legendary stories, which moved him to see

> . . . Enthralments far
> More self-destroying, . . .
> I, 798-99

by which he meant experiences of the poetic soul which free it of egotism. The chief of these experiences was said to be made "of love and friendship."

In this experience, the meeting of Endymion and the old man and the wanderer's subsequent pity, we have the beginning of an adventure whose theme is "love and friendship." The old man we soon learn is Glaucus, and the story related is the fable of Glaucus and Scylla. The invocation to the moon[1] praised the magic alchemy of the moon light that could bring to life beauties of the earth and sea. In

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1. See above, p. 106

this journey under sea Endymion's story is a tale of human sympathy and the divine compassion of the moon goddess.

Glaucus reassured Endymion and told him that he knew Endymion loved "an unknown power," that he, Glaucus, was a friend to love, and that Endymion was

> . . . Commisioned to this fated spot
> For great enfranchisement. O weep no more;
> I am a friend to love, to loves of yore:
> Aye, hadst thou never loved an unknown power,
> I had been grieving at this joyous hour.
> III, 298-302

Presently they went forward together over jewelled sands, the ocean at their back. Meanwhile Glaucus was telling his story. Once long ago he had been a fisherman. For a thousand years he had been under a spell. He dispelled a thousand years with a backward glance, and recalled he had been "a lonely youth on desert shores." (339) Lonely sports, dolphin playmates, friendly monsters of the deep, songs of the shepherds' pipes echoing from high places were among his memories. In spite of such security and beauty as he enjoyed, he had been overtaken with unaccountable longings to escape Neptune's rule and to be able to live and breathe beneath the sea.

> . . . Long in misery
> I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
> I plunged for life or death. . . .
> III, 378-80

The plunge brought life. As soon as he was accustomed to the element, he marvelled over the wonders of the ocean bed, as Endymion had done when he first had fled into "the giant sea." (II, 1023)

His wish to live in the sea having been granted, he had loved and pursued the sea-nymph Scylla who had feared him and fled him "swift as sea-bird on the wing." (404) Maddened by love he asked aid of Circe. Into this scene is dropped one of those perfect lines breathing romance that every reader finds in Endymion. As he called on Circe, Glaucus raised his head above water to look for "Phoebus' daughter."

> Aeaea's isle was wondering at the moon.
> III, 415

Words have painted a picture of the magic alchemy of the moonlight falling on a mysterious island of Grecian story. Dazed and fainting, Glaucus fell under the spell of Circe's enchantment.

The story now takes on a familiar ring; it is Endymion's experience repeated. Just as the Latmian had

fallen asleep in moonlight and in a vision had been visited by a lovely goddess, and then had lost her, so Glaucus in a swoon from Circe's witchcraft had found himself in "a twilight bower" swept by music and had become "a tranced vassal" (460) of a nymph who visited him each eve. Forthwith he must tell

> How specious heaven was changed to real hell.
> III, 476

One morning she was gone. Through dark and gloomy forests Glaucus ran in search of her. A blue flame drew him toward a fearful sight, and revealed the secret of his love's identity. Circe, whom he had loved, was holding court, seated upon an "uptorn forest root." The swine of her court, once human beings, groveled about her. Soon she cast upon them a charm. Whereupon they all with horrible noise,

> Went through the dismal air like one huge Python
> Antagonizing Boreas, - and so vanished.
> Yet there was not a breath of wind: she vanish'd
> Those phantoms with a nod. . . .
> III, 530-33

Afterwards a mad revelry of fauns, nymphs, and satyrs went on until an elephant appeared and bowed before the witch. The elephant's prayer in human accents to Circe

to be freed of the enchantment and allowed to die, brought to Glaucus a knowledge of where he was, and he fainted. For three days he fled in terror, and hid in the wood. Circe then appeared before him. The detested witch pronounced the doom of her former lover in dramatic and ironic lines:

> "Ha! ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse
> Made of rose leaves and thistle down, express,
> To cradle thee, my sweet, and lull thee; yes,
> I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch:
> My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.
> So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
> Unheard of yet: and it shall still its cries
> Upon some breast more lily-feminine.
> Oh, no - it shall not pine, and pine, and pine.
> More than one pretty, trifling thousand years."
> III, 570-79

Since he was immortal, she could not destroy him; but she could take away his youth. So she drove him into the sea to live an old, old man a thousand years

> . . . "Which gone, I then bequeath
> Thy fragile bones to unknown burial,
> Adieu, sweet love, adieu!" . . .
> III, 598-600

Despairing Glaucus was forced to wade into the ocean waves. With his last strength before feebleness could overcome him entirely, he was swimming through the billows. From this point Keats departs from the traditional myth.

Soon the sea-god learned that Circe had taken an even more terrible revenge than depriving him of youth and vigor. As he struggled in the waves, he touched the dead face of Scylla. Glaucus bore the body of the beautiful sea-nymph to a grotto

> Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
> III, 629

With a swift, vivid touch of poetic description he is made to relate

> Headlong I darted; at one eager swirl
> Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd and behold!
> 'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold.
> III, 630-32

He left the body in a niche in the under-sea temple, for already his limbs were becoming,

> Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.
> III, 638

There passed without hope for him a cruel space of centuries before his redemption began, and one half of the witch's spell was destroyed. One day Glaucus, sitting upon "a rock above the spray," saw coming over the horizon a gallant vessel. It foundered in a storm, while

. . . All the billows green
Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.
III, 654-55

Glaucus cursed his inability to save the struggling crew. The vessel and the crew gone, he sat mournfully regarding with tear-fill'd eyes the now empty ocean. All at once there emerged from the water beneath him an old man's hand bearing a scroll and a wand. Feebly Glaucus reached for the hand, but the weight of the body drew it back into the sea; and Glaucus found himself left with the wand and the scroll which the old man had held.

In the warm air he read the magic scroll which seemed to refer to him. The scroll told of a forlorn wretch who would live a thousand years and then die alone. Yet it said he should not die, if he would read and study all magic formulas, if he would study the secrets of nature, and chiefly, if he would place the bodies of all drowned lovers side by side in a sanctuary under sea. These things he must do until finally there would come to him a youth, heaven-sent, to effect his deliverance. Should the youth refuse "to consummate all," they would both be destroyed.

Note that it was through an act of mercy, an attempted rescue, that the spell of hatred and revenge laid upon Glaucus began to be destroyed. Endymion had found himself in

the sea while his tears for the sorrow of Arethusa and Alpheus were wet upon his face. Sympathy was leading both Glaucus and Endymion in their search.

> "Then," cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd,
> "We are twin brothers in this destiny!"
> III, 712-15

Thus the Latmian joyfully accepted his share in the prescribed duty, and the wanderer and the old man, or rather "the young soul in age's mask," (310) hurried on to the hall, "gleaming through the tide." Within the crystal palace lay enshrined the thousands of lovers, meek and patient dead.

At once Glaucus began to fulfill the decree so that he might break the spell under which he and the dead lay. With mumbled words he tore the scroll to bits. Next he wrapped Endymion in the blue cloak, struck the air nine times with his wand, and then bade the Latmian carefully unwind a tangled thread and read an invisible message on a shell. Last, in obedience to Glaucus' command, Endymion broke the wand against a lyre which was standing on a pedestal. The wand broken, an outburst of ravishing music came softly to their ears.

Endymion evidently had powers superior to those of

Glaucus. The latter had acquired his wisdom through centuries of study; Endymion was

> A youth by heavenly power lov'd and led
> III, 708

Through intuition and inspiration the poetic soul knew the secrets of nature and the mysteries of life and death. Glaucus recognized one more divinely favored than himself. Hence he cast his magic mantle about Endymion, thus endowing the poet with all his dearly-bought wisdom. All the intricacies of the charm were as nothing in comparison with the power of poetic insight. Glaucus exclaimed,

> A power overshadows thee! O brave!
> The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
> III, 759-60

As further proof of poetic intuition, the secrets of nature were laid bare to Endymion, who read the shell "pearly blank" to Glaucus, who was overjoyed with the message thereon, and immediately declared they were both safe.

The wanderer, moving to the ravishing music evoked by the broken lyre, scattered as directed bits of the torn scroll over Glaucus. In the poet's words,

> . . . 'Mid the sound
> Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
> Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
> And scattered in his face some fragments light.
> How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight
> Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
> Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
> Appeared. . . .
>
> III, 771-78

He was, in fact, a youthful god.

Glaucus moved to the side of the beautiful Scylla. Endymion applied the charm, and Scylla revived. One by one, as he scattered pieces of the torn scroll, Endymion "reanimated" the dead lovers who lifted up their heads,

> As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
>
> III, 786

Sounds of gladness filled the air. They gazed upon Endymion as their deliverer, while

> Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
> Budded, and swell'd, and full-blown, shed full showers
> Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
>
> III, 798-800

At last the two deliverers had tasted real happiness,

> Distracted with the richest overflow
> Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.
>
> III, 805-6

Love and friendship had conquered malice and death.

When all had risen up, Glaucus shouted to the congregated lovers to follow him and Scylla, that they might all

> . . . "pay
> Our piety to Neptunus supreme!"
> III, 807-8

Then with Scylla and Glaucus leading, that great company passed through giant columns into the "boundless emerald" of the sea and flowed joyously down marble steps,

> . . . pouring as easily
> As hour-glass sand, - and fast, as you might see
> Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
> Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.
> III, 814-17

Along a path was seen another multitude approaching. They met on the sand, and some in either crowd recognized their lost loves restored to life. Old loves were happily reunited. The poet wrote,

> . . . 'Tis dizziness to think on it.
> III, 827

In this manner the pageant pictured in the realm of the sea god began with the reunion of lovers. The host moved forward many leagues until dawn found them in view of Neptune's palace, another marvel of vast and vague

architectural splendors. It was morning when Endymion began his journey in the sea (113); a day had passed. The poet revels in his color description of the palace touched by the sunrise.

> Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
> By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
> A blush of coral. . . .
>
> III, 841-43

Through a rainbow arch the "Paphian army" marched into the outer courts of the palace and thence through a golden gate to behold Neptune on his emerald throne between Venus and Cupid, a sight so majestic their eyes could not gaze upon its beauty.

The waters arched over Neptune's great palace (870) made a vault in which

> . . . flashed sudden everywhere,
> Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering
> Death to a human eye. . . .
>
> III, 873-75

Cloudlets in the ocean are a startling imagining, but not more striking than the source of the submarine light as described,

> . . . for there did spring
> From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
> A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
> A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.
>
> III, 875-78

Amazed and motionless the great company

> . . . stood in dreams
> Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang;
> The Nereids danced; the Syrens faintly sang;
> And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head.
> Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed
> On all the multitude a nectarous dew.
> III, 887-92

Here is invention, indeed, cloudlets in an ocean sky and "nectarous dew" distilled in the sea depths.

Glaucus and Scylla received the blessing of Venus and Neptune respectively. Venus was surprised to find Endymion "still wandering in the bands of love," for, she told him,

> . . . "Since the hour
> I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
> Have I put forth to serve thee." . . .
> III, 894-96

She promised that he would soon escape "from dull mortality's harsh net." (907) She advised him,

> . . . Love will have his day.
> So wait awhile expectant. . . .
> III, 915-16

During this colloquy of Venus and Endymion, a glorious revelry of "dance and song, and garlanding" delighted the throng. Keats confesses (937-40) he felt unequal through

weakness to finishing the story and hurried to the end. The pageantry was now expressed in music and a hymn to Neptune, Venus, and Cupid, which is not comparable with the hymn to Pan in spontaneity of expression or depth of thought. The clamor ceased, being interrupted by the entrance of Oceanus and a train of Nereids. Such magnificence was more than a mortal could bear. Again Keats used the device of having his hero lose consciousness when he wanted to terminate a scene. Now the palace whirled about Endymion; he grew dizzy. He called to Venus,

> "O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
> Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!
> I die - I hear her voice - I feel my wing-"
> III, 1010-12

and then fell insensible at Neptune's feet.

As the pitying Nereids were carrying him to "a crystal bower," his inward senses heard a call from his unknown love,

> Written in starlight on the dark above.
> III, 1021

The writing on the sky, which Endymion alone could read, promised him happiness which he had sought far and deep.

> Dearest Endymion! My entire love!
> How have I dwelt in fear of fate; 'tis done-
> Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
> Arise then! . . .
> . . . Awake! Awake!
> III, 1022-25, 1027

When he came to himself, he was lying on the grass beside a forest pool in his native Caria. He was at home on earth, happy again, and there the third book closes.

This book is concerned less with the hero than it is with characters who have no connection with the story except that the poet deliberately included them. There is less originality than in previous books, and more use of old materials. The myth of Glaucus and Scylla, revised by the poet, has been interpolated in the story of Endymion's quest for beauty to awaken the poetic soul to a sympathy with human sorrow. Ideas from folk tales are abundant. The hand rising from the sea, the sprinkling of bits of torn paper to annul enchantment in lieu of water customarily used in fairy lore, the philosopher's scroll, the magic robe, the exercise of a charm by waving the wand nine times in the air, the deciphering of secret messages on the shell by the one predestined to interpret the mystery are interwoven with the classic myth. The magical transformation of sea-kings and sea-queens moving under the sea

as easily as men move in air, have passed through the alchemy of the poet's mind from their source in "that old tale Arabian." (I, 406)

A change in Endymion had developed through association with Glaucus. Much of the wisdom which Glaucus had learned from a captivity of five hundred years, Endymion grasped intuitively. Glaucus' punishment of inactivity had begun to relax when he felt sympathy for the drowing sailors. He had been miraculously promised complete release from the curse of helplessness resting upon him when one more divinely gifted than he should pass that way. Although Endymion had been repelled at first, as soon as he recognized the grief of Glaucus, the Latmian had felt his heart go out to the sea-god cursed by Circe's spell. Thence Endymion followed eagerly and quickly the directions Glaucus had acquired through the wisdom so slowly and painfully learned. Together they restored to activity great numbers of lovers "whom storms have doom'd to die," (722) and who had been preserved in death by Glaucus' pious care.

As the poet's music "breath'd her soul away," (767) Glaucus and Scylla were restored to youth and happiness. Afterwards the thousands of lovers revived amid inexpressible

joy. Sympathy learned by Glaucus through a long and painful process, but instantly aroused in Endymion's heart, had increased, and worked great wonders.

It was late summer when the adventure related in Book Three befell Endymion. The full moon from whose brightness he had fled in Book Two (217-18) had faded and was only a thin crescent in the west,

> Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
> III, 78

when its beams sought out Endymion in the underworld. Under its kindly ministrations he slept until morning. Then began the journey during which he explored the ocean floor, and visited Neptune's court in the realm of the sea-god. His adventure ended on the second morning with his awakening in his native land.

The most famous poetical beauties of the third book are the moon passages. They are, also, the passages in which the poet wrote with the greatest inspiration. Keats reveals the secret of his inspiration to be the moon, "the gentlier-mightiest" (43) in a couplet,

> As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent
> Towards her with the Muses in thine heart.
> III, 48-9

From this point onwards he praised the power of the moon's beauty to revive whatever her beams shone upon. In such a manner great numbers were enabled to live again by Endymion, divinely inspired to recognize beauty wherever found. His quest for immortal Beauty had fitted him for the task of bestowing upon all the other lovers a share in the beneficence of Beauty. Through an acquaintance with the woes of lovers, Alpheus and Arethusa, he had first felt the friendly sympathy which afterwards increased boundlessly.

The poet saw that if Endymion was to win immortality, "escape from dull mortality's harsh net," (907) it would be through love's guidance. The theme is never more plainly stated in the entire poem than in the lines:

> O love! how potent hast thou been to teach
> Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,
> In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
> In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
> Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
> III, 92-96

Hence Love guided Endymion on his search undersea for beauty. The moon sent a gentle beam to "the deep, deep water-world" (101) to find Endymion, and her quiet radiance soothed him to repose all night. The poet had gained confidence. With the morning light Endymion moved "along

his fated way." (119) Glaucus' exclamation, "Thou art the man!" struck terror to Endymion's heart, for he feared death would torture in "this cold region" (259) the one who sought immortal Beauty. However, it meant only that the wanderer, divinely led and inspired, was to open

> The prison gates that have so long oppress.
> III, 296

Glaucus dwelt upon the commission that had sent Endymion "for great enfranchisement," (299) Is it too much to find a similarity between Glaucus' desire to be free from Neptune's tyranny which he related to Endymion, and the poet's denunciation of the tyranny of the English ministers related in the introduction to the third book? However that may be, Glaucus realized the divine commission of Endymion,

> A youth by heavenly power, lov'd and led.
> III, 708

Then was wisdom united with inspiration in their expression of sympathy, and

> Death fell a-weeping in her charnel house.
> III, 788

The spell was broken.

It is to be noted that the result of this outpouring

of sympathy and love was the

> . . . richest overflow
> Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.
> III, 805-6

The remaining two hundred lines of the book celebrate the rapture of the great company restored to life by the coming of Endymion, "strayed far from mortality." (1007) When Endymion awoke from the trance which the overpowering beauty of the scene had brought upon him, he had found repose. A placid lake and a green forest lay cool and quiet before his eyes. Endymion in quest of Beauty, had gained sympathy and friendship through which he had been "enabled to work miracles of joy and healing."[1]

When it is recalled that Professor Thorpe interprets this book as "an adventure in human friendship and sympathy,"[2] and Professor Finney as "the neo-Platonic quest of immortality through appreciation of the beauty of friendship or sympathy for humanity,"[3] it will be seen that their interpretations are in accord with the preceding exposition. Through an act of human love and friendship, Endymion was prepared for the next higher experience in his quest for immortal Beauty, a union with the spirit of sorrow and suffering in the world.

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1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 195
2. See above, p. 17
3. See above, p. 17

CHAPTER VI

AN ANALYSIS OF BOOK FOUR

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Keats launched the fourth book of Endymion with an invocation to the Muse of his native land. This, the shortest of his introductions, only twenty-nine lines, begins in the grand manner,

> Muse of my native land! loftiest Muse!
> O first born on the mountains! by the hues
> Of heaven on the spiritual airs begot:
> IV, 1-3

and ends in despondency.

To Keats poetry was always the highest art. Regretfully he recognized that the production of poetry had been long delayed in his island home while the land was in a state of barbarism.

> Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
> While yet our England was a wolfish den;
> Before our forests heard the talk of men;
> Before the first of Druids was a child;-
> Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
> Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
> IV, 4-9

In succeeding lines he alluded to Hebrew (10), Greek (11), Roman (15), and Italian (16) poetry -- all of which preceded the great accomplishments of English poetry.

> There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:-
> Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
> Apollo's garland:- yet didst thou divine
> Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,
> "Come hither, Sister of the Island!" Plain
> Spake fair Ausonia: and once more she spake
> A higher summons:- still didst thou betake
> Thee to thy native hopes.
> IV, 10-17

At last the English Muse expressed herself in a burst of magnificent poetry. But her great days were over, and the poets of his generation could not compare with the great ones of the past.

> . . . Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,
> Of flesh and bones, curbs, and confines, and frets
> Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
> Our pillows: and the fresh tomorrow morn
> Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
> Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.[1]
> IV, 20-25

Lack of inspiration depressed his spirit; nevertheless he sternly pressed on to the conclusion of his great task. "I move to the end in lowliness of heart." (29)

And then abruptly Keats plunged into a scene without a beginning. A voice never before heard in the poem lamented her enforced absence from her native Indian home.

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1. It is interesting to observe that Notcutt makes no comment on these lines although they contain the only reference to the development of English poetry in the poem, and Notcutt bases his interpretation on the thought that the allegory in Endymion signifies the re-awakening of English poetry.

When her sorrowful words came to Endymion's ears, he was paying his vows to the gods; and when he heard the maiden's complaint, he hastened to discover the secret of the voice bewailing her solitude and begging for love.

> Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost
> Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
> Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only hear
> A woman's sigh alone, and in distress?
> See not her charms! Is Phoebe passionless?
> Phoebe is fairer far. . . .
> IV, 52-57

The Carian did not heed the heavenly warning, but gazed unseen upon the beauty lying on the forest grass. Endymion leaning against a tree trunk heard the maid declare she could love this shepherd youth.

> "Ah me, how I could love! - My soul doth melt
> For the unhappy youth." . . .
> IV, 71-72

As the maid continued her love soliloquy, Keats was trying desperately to recapture the mood of his first book. (I, 780-97)

> "And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
> There is no lightning, no authentic dew
> But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,
> Melodious howsoever, can confound
> The heavens and earth in one to such a death

> As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath
> Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
> Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
> Of passion from the heart!" . . .
> IV, 77-85

It is a restatement of the theory that love is the creative principle in nature.

The wanderer reproached himself for "thirsting for another love," not from a sense of treachery to his heavenly love,

> Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee
> By Juno's smile I turn not - no, no, no-;
> IV, 92-93

but from the struggle within his own soul between his affection for his former heavenly love and the yearning for this earthly love of the glossy black curls.

> "I have a triple soul! O fond pretence -
> For both, for both my love is immense;
> I feel my heart is cut for them in twain."
> And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.
> . . . . . .
> He sprang from his green covert.
> IV, 85-98, 101

Now that he found himself in love with three, his unknown love, Diana, and this earthly maiden, he was ashamed of his fickleness.

O pardon me, for I am full of grief -
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. . . .
IV, 107-10

This sensual attraction for the Indian maid weighed upon his soul so heavily that he could no longer hope to soar with his ideal. She would be his executioner, he said, and in a few short hours neither love nor hatred would be anything to him whom passion had slain. Nevertheless, so great was the attraction that her tears reconciled him to his death.

The Indian maid encouraged him and counseled him to have no fear. She could see nothing that presaged his death.

. . . " Are not these green nooks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?-
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose tonight. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks 'twould be a guilt - a very guilt -
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light - the dusk - the dark - till break of day."
IV, 127-36

That striking effect in the final line the poet has achieved before. The same rhythmical repetition was used referring to the moon,

"How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe!"
III, 80

However, the maid's hopeful words were unheeded. Endymion accepted as true the belief that the contention in his heart between his new earthly and his old heavenly love would kill him. He asked only that the maiden sing to him that he might die to music. Since she had spoken of Indian streams, he asked for a song of "other climates." Keats gave no other reason for the interpolation in the poem of the song, known as the Ode to Sorrow, or the Indian Maiden's Song.

It was the purpose of the poet to show that the soul taught by sorrow can manifest a deep affinity with humanity, that such an experience gives to the poetic soul the most sympathetic understanding of life. In Book One Keats had portrayed the marriage of the soul of a poet with sensuous beauty. In Book Two he had written of the accession of beauty to the soul of a poet through sensual love. Book Three had related an adventure in friendship and love. The perception of the ennobling effect of friendship led to a still higher "enthralment," (I,798) the union of the poetic soul with the spirit of sorrow and suffering in the world. This interpretation of the underlying principle of the fourth book is perceived first

in the Song of Sorrow.

Keats called this piece a roundelay (145), which it resembles only in the fact that its opening measures are repeated at the close. These opening stanzas are in a mood of wistful pathos reminiscent of an Elizabethan love lyric. The plaintive stanzas invoke Sorrow and question her about the beauty which she steals from one and with which she enriches another. The lyric is slightly confused and can be understood best by quoting a number of the dreamy, remote stanzas. The song begins

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?-
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon's eye?-
To give the glow worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spray?[1]
IV, 146-57

The song passed from the questions contained in the above stanzas to a recital of the maid's story as she told what had happened to her. First, she declared herself to be an unwilling companion to Sorrow.

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1. The rhyme recalls the taunt of "Cockney" hurled at Keats by his critics.

To Sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly;
She is so constant to me, and so kind;
I would deceive her
And so leave her,
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.
IV, 173-81

This section of the long Ode to Sorrow is followed immediately by a story of Bacchus and his rout, a lyric of eight stanzas, sometimes called the "Triumph of Bacchus." In these stanzas we find the maiden's story.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept, -
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cup with tears
Cold as my fears.
IV, 182-87

Here is a touch of weirdness and mystery, a lonely maiden weeping beside a distant river. But then came Bacchus.

And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: . . .
. . . . . .
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din -
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
IV, 193-94, 196-99

The song then related how the Indian maid forgot her melancholy, as she saw the Bacchantes with

> . . . faces all on flame;
> All madly dancing through the pleasant valley;
> IV, 201-2

and she fell in with his train, "rush'd into the folly." (208)

Within his car aloft young Bacchus stood. (209) He was a merry, dancing, sportive youth.

The description of Bacchus is followed by musical stanzas which recite the maiden's challenging of the Maenads and Satyrs, and their replies.

> "Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!
> So many, and so many, and such glee?
> Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
> Your lutes, and gentler fate?-"
> "We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
> A conquering!
> Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
> We dance before him through kingdoms wide:-
> Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
> To our wild minstrelsy."
> IV, 218-27

A reader will notice these are very tame Maenads. In comparison with the furies of the Bacchanalia, Keats' Maenads are agreeable and gay.

The succeeding stanzas add to the choral effect

by repeating the first two lines and the last two lines of the preceding stanza. The entire song is so much of a composite, containing such variety that it must be dealt with in parts.

> "Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!
> So many, and so many, and such glee?
> Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
> Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?-"
> "For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
> For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
> And cold mushrooms;
> For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
> Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth!-
> Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
> To our mad minstrelsy."
> IV, 228-38

As the song continues, we see that the country through which the Bacchic rout danced was not India. Clearly except for the palm tree by the river side, there is no natural object in these stanzas but is English. It is the scenery of the country with which Keats was familiar that the Bacchic train traversed. "Berried holly" (205) hidden under the shade of tall chestnut trees in June, cowslips blooming in grassy fields in May (167), heath, flowering broom, and mushrooms cold with dew (232), the nightingale in the pale evening singing to a listener standing in dewy grass (162), were the things of nature Keats included in this song. He must have met with these

beauties in his rambles and have been familiar with them since childhood. His imagination gave the things he loved not only to the forests of Pan, but also to regions traversed by Bacchus.

The idea that this Bacchic hymn is a composition of many impressions perceived in the variation of the stanzas is presented even more vigorously in the stanza describing Bacchus on the march. Therein is an extraordinary assembling of animals. We read of yoked tigers and leopards "panting" along with elephants, zebras and Arabian horses prancing, laughing infants mimicking sailors as they rode along mounted on the backs of scaly crocodiles. The Indian maid related that the followers of Bacchus rode panthers and lions for hunts. In a moment, magic could whisk all the Bacchantes the length of a three days' journey. The menagerie of their procession included the "spleenful unicorn" which was sacred to a sun-rise hunt. The stanza has an animated rhythm. The fine sweep of the verse, and its jovial incredibility influence me to quote it entire,

> Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
> And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
> Onward the tiger and leopard pants,
> With Asian elephants:
> Onward these myriads - with song and dance,
> With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
> Web-footed alligators, crocodiles

Bearing upon their scaly backs in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.
IV, 239-50

The poet retained the Eastern atmosphere entirely in the final stanza of the Triumph of Bacchus. The Indian maid related that the Bacchic train had strayed through "parch'd Abyssinia." Then it had swept from Africa to India where she had seen jeweled treasures of Indian kings scattered, and the reign of Brahma threatened. But she fell out of the march and wandered alone through the forest until she met Endymion. The song returned to the opening motive, and "ended as it began with a rare strain of lovelorn, ironic pathos."[1]

The consideration which impelled Endymion to a decision to love the Indian maid - it will be recalled that this love would cause his death - was not her mere loveliness. It was her desolation expressed through the sad song she was singing for him. Even as she sang in surrender to sorrow,

Come then, Sorrow!
Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
I thought to leave thee
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best;
IV, 279-84

1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 232

Keats believed of all things poetical he must cherish sorrow first.

Keats believed that the poet must find in the tragedy of the world his poetic salvation. He must cherish sorrow, and through experience become acquainted with mankind. It was directly to the poet within that the Indian maid sang her concluding stanza.

> There is not one,
> No, no, not one
> But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
> Thou art her mother,
> And her brother,
> Her playmate and her wooer in the shade.
> IV, 285-90

Keats included two lyrics in the construction of the Indian maiden's song, the Ode to Sorrow and the Triumph of Bacchus. In the first is felt an Elizabethan wistfulness, in the latter an Eastern romantic association. The scenery is in some stanzas the fields and hedgerows of England; in others the details are of Africa and Asia. There is variation in the rhythms; there are various moods, loneliness, sprightliness, pathos. Keats' "desire to smooth things" appears in several stanzas.[1] The animals are not fierce; even the "spleenful unicorn" is tractable. The Maenads are "merry Damsels," not drunken women.

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 431

Professor Colvin states that this song is "strikingly original in form and conception."[1]

The line immediately following the song,

> O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
> IV, 291

must have been autobiographical. The Indian maid was utterly exhausted by the account of her miseries. The Carian, speechless, gazed on her,

> And listened to the wind that now did stir
> About the crisped oaks full drearily,
> Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
> Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
> IV, 294-97

Consequently the reader understands that months had intervened since Endymion had returned from his journey under the sea. (III, 1028) Now autumn's dreary voice was sounding sorrowfully in his ears. The poet's plan for the composition of the poem (I, 46-57) coincided with the season in which he was writing. It was April when he began his poem, and April the season when the hero started his wandering. (I, 138) Midsummer found him writing the second book. (II, 74) A lapse of time accounted for in the lines,

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1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 229

> . . . For many days,
> Had he been wandering in uncertain ways:
> Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks.
> II, 47-50

rationalizes the use of the wild rose and the butterfly which guided Endymion on his second adventure. The moon passages of the third book are obviously August pictures. It has been pointed out that only a few days come between the events of the second and third books.[1] In the third book the harvest moon has dwindled to its last quarter. "She dies at the thinnest cloud." (81) Now in this final book two months later Endymion felt the first touch of the autumn. A sense of loss and melancholy pervades the scene.

The lonely prince wooed the Indian maid, torn between disloyalty to his heavenly love and desire for this earthly love, the latter being a union with sorrow which he believed "would murder half his soul." (309) He had been listening

> . . . to the wind that now did stir
> About the crisped oaks full drearily,
> IV, 294-95

and his first speech to the maid after the conclusion of her sorrowful song emphasized the thought that this new alliance is with sorrow.

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1. See above, p. 105

> . . . Poor lady, how thus long
> Have I been able to endure that voice?
> Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
> I must be thy sad servant evermore:
> I can not choose but kneel here and adore.
> IV, 298-302

His intelligence called him to remember his former love for whose favor he had journeyed far, but his emotion bade him whisper lovingly to the "kind Syren." Unhappily, at the moment of his complete surrender to her charm, suddenly the words, "Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?" echoed through the forest. The trembling lovers clasped each other terrified, as there appeared a sudden apparition of Mercury descending. For a second only, Mercury was before them while he lightly touched the ground with his wand and swiftly darted heavenward. The gods intended an unexpected solution for his dilemma. Where their messenger had touched the ground, two jet-black horses with large blue wings sprang forth. Endymion set the Indian maid upon one of the horses, and mounted the other himself.

> . . . Through the air they flew,
> High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
> Exhal'd to Phoebus lips, away they are gone,
> Far from the earth away - unseen, alone,
> Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
> The buoyant life of song can floating be
> Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.
> IV, 347-53

Poetry alone could soar so high as their flight. It must be their interpreter. Seeming to realize that the most difficult part of his tale was now to be told, the poet related that the winged steeds entered a "sleepy dusk." The mist enfolded the couch of Sleep, floating slowly towards heaven to witness "the marriage melodies" of a goddess and a mortal.

The steeds, too, asleep with level outspread wings drifted along, and upon those outstretched wings Endymion and the maid were slumbering.

> Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
> Upon a calm sea drifting; and meanwhile
> The mournful wanderer's dreams. . . .
> IV, 405-7

Endymion dreamed he had entered Olympus, and was walking and talking with the deities. He was a very young person, indeed. With childlike confidence, he fed Juno's peacocks pearly grain, tried the bow of Apollo and the shield of Pallas, drank from Hebe's cup, and blew a bugle which summoned the Hours and the Seasons to a dance. Here he was in Diana's own realm. The gods and goddesses inquired of one another who this mortal might be that played divine music, and answered each other that it was Diana's beloved. "Lo," they cried, "she rises crescented."

Endymion looked.

> . . . 'Tis she,
> His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
> And air, and pains, and care, and suffering:
> Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
> Towards her, and awakes - . . .
> IV, 430-34

For the first time he seemed to recognize Diana as the goddess whom he had loved and sought so long through earth, ocean, and sky.

With what perplexity did he turn from the goddess to the sleeping beauty beside him. The enchanting beauty of the dark maid lured him to kiss her, but again he grew

> . . . forgetful of all beauty save
> Young Phoebe's, golden-hair'd; and so 'gan crave
> Forgiveness: yet he turned once more to look
> At the sweet sleeper - all his soul was shook.
> IV, 450-53

Even though his heart had owned Diana, or Phoebe, as "its rightful throne," he once more praised his earthly love. The shadow of the ideal dissolved in tears; and Endymion, distracted, cried to the disappearing goddess,

> "Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue,
> I have no daedale heart." . . .
> IV, 458-59

Her disappearance wrung from him the despairing cry,

> . . . Is there nought for me,
> Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?
> IV, 460-61

Endymion, the poetic soul, had allowed to slip from him his highest ideal of beauty, because he faltered and could not be constant to the heavenly vision. He had not as yet recognized the Mystery, although he was seeking through a union with sorrow an understanding heart that would teach him the secrets revealed only to the seer. He had not divined what the reader suspects, that the Indian maid was the incarnation of the goddess. Hence he never held fast the company of both.

His cry awoke the Indian maid. She wept although he assured her his other love was gentle and kind, and would not seek revenge upon the maid. He wished that he were as whole-hearted in love as the goddess was in tenderness. It was strange to him that he felt innocent in spite of disloyalty to both. Torn by conflicting earthly and immortal loves, perplexed by a tangled web of circumstances, and carried out of himself, the poet cried out,

> . . . "What is this soul then? Whence
> Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
> Have no self-passion, or identity."
> IV, 475-77

That was Keats himself speaking.

> "Some fearful end must be: where, where is it?
> By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
> Alone about the dark. Forgive me, sweet:
> Shall we away?" . . .
>
> IV, 478-81

In an agony of confusion, the Latmian had begged the maid's forgiveness, and suggested that they fly away from this mist of sleep. The poetic soul was pictured in conflict with his ideals, but not in defeat.

> Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
> This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st
> Pillowed in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
> What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
>
> IV, 465-68

Not sure of anything, "he roused the steeds;" he rekindled his imagination to a more conscious effort, and once more they set sail into the clear air.

When the Indian maid had finished her song, dusk was falling. Their first flight on the plumed horses had been in the twilight, sailing in "the sleeping dusk." (362) Now as the spirit climbed in lofty aspiration, evermore reaching for the beauty that had vanished from its grasp, night had darkened the heavens.

> The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,
> And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
> In the dusk heavens silverly, when they
> Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
> IV, 484-87

While time was passing, Endymion and the maid exchanged eternal vows and oaths, both "witless of their dooms." (492)

The wanderers in heavenly regions beheld the moon emerge from a cloud. It is a chaste and exquisite picture which Keats drew of this classical scene:

> . . . from ebon streak
> The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
> No bigger than an unobserved star,
> Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;
> Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
> Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
> She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.
> IV, 496-502

As the beauty of the moon regained its hold upon him, Endymion turned to his companion to find her gaunt and ghostly. A moment more, and she was not there, but had vanished. Her steed dropped to the earth, and he was left alone.

For the first time he seemed to have lost both; he had not regained the celestial love, and the human love could not endure in the presence of Diana. For the moment he was hopeless and abandoned. The charger still bore

him onwards towards a haven, a place of rest, wherein the soul tormented with grief might fall into a deep sleep and experience surcease of torment. The description of this haven is a long passage of great beauty.

> . . . There lies a den
> Beyond the seeming confines of the space
> Made for the soul to wander in and trace
> Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
> Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
> Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
> One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
> Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
> . . . . . .
> . . . The man is yet to come
> Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
> But few have ever felt how calm and well
> Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
> There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:
> Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
> Yet all is still within and desolate.
> Beset with painful gusts within ye hear
> No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
> The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
> Who strives therefore: on the sudden it is won.
> Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
> Then it is free to him; and from an urn
> Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught -
> . . . . . .
> . . . Happy gloom!
> Dark paradise!. . .
> . . . . . .
> Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
> Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
> O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
> Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
> In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
> For never since thy griefs and woes began,
> Hast thou felt so content; a grievous feud
> Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
> Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne
> With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn
> Because he knew not whither he was going.
> IV, 512-19, 522-35, 537-38, 541-51

This has been called a "true description of apathy."[1]

So entranced was "the gentle Carian" that he failed to notice, though his winged horse had heard and turned towards the sound, an angelic host, a "pinioned multitude," which passed him singing. He seemed, however, to have heard the celestial beings blowing their trumpets and proclaiming the wedding festival of Diana, asking

> . . ."Who, who away would be
> From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?"
> IV, 565-66

In a choral song they invited the signs of the zodiac and the constellations to the festival.

The first stanza of this song is expressive of Keats' close observance of nature.

> Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
> Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
> Your baskets high
> With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
> Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
> Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;
> Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
> All gathered in the dewy morning.
> IV, 572-79

Amy Lowell's comment on this stanza is just, I think. "The beginning of this song is quite charming, with its

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1. Owen, F. M., Op. Cit., p. 101

catalogue of flowers and herbs written in that simple, effective style which is so peculiarly English, to be copied by no other nation whatsoever. It has persisted in English poetry since the days of Chaucer, and is one of the chief delights of the Elizabethans. It seems almost a property of the soil, for expatriated Englishmen soon lose the touch."[1]

The song ended abruptly. His steed swept downward and deposited Endymion upon the earth. The shock of the return to reality renewed Endymion's sufferings. By that shock he perceived he must forsake shadowy griefs;

> . . . to him
> Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
> Sorrow is but a shadow. . . .
> IV, 619-21

If he were ever to come to an understanding of sorrow, he must "feel the solid ground." (622) For a further acquaintance with reality he also desired most ardently to be united with the Indian maid;

> . . . let us fare
> On forest-fruits, and never, never go
> Among the abodes of mortals here below,
> Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!
> IV, 626-29

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 448

He resisted the impulse to lose himself again in unreality.

> Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
> But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
> IV, 630-31

The exaltation of the flight was gone. Once more he pined for the human contact he had enjoyed with her, the "swan of the Ganges," and felt he had been unworthy in clinging to impossible aspirations.

> . . . I have clung
> To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
> Or felt but a great dream! . . .
> IV, 636-38

Disillusioned, he declared he had been

> Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
> Against all elements, against the tie
> Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
> Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
> Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
> Has my own soul conspir'd; so my story
> Will I to children utter, and repent.
> IV, 639-45

It should be noticed here that when Endymion recalled the objects of beauty the poet had stated in the Proem "must be with us, or we die," (I, 33) he was declaring that he had been unfaithful to his great vision.

This mood must be understood as a moment of poetic

self-revelation. The neglect of contact with human and earthly joys would destroy a man, for

> There never lived a mortal man, who bent
> His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
> But starv'd and died. . . .
> IV, 646-48

Declaring his intentions to live secluded with his Indian maid forever, he said farewell to his aspirations in symbolic terms.

> . . . Caverns lone, farewell!
> The air of visions, and the monstrous swell
> Of visionary seas! No, never more
> Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
> Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
> IV, 651-55

He meant to devote himself to his human love, yet not without regret for his dream goddess in "pure elysium" whom he might never love on earth. In order to ensure Diana's favor on his other love, he planned to propitiate the goddess with sacrifices.

The hold on reality was so slight his dreams still confused him. The maid eluded him.

> Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that! - all good
> We'll talk about - no more of dreaming. . . .
> IV, 668-69

And what did he think about to drive out the dreaming?

Why he painted a picture of a happy home among woods and hills, a picture of the natural beauty which always evoked a response from this poet.

> Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
> Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
> Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
> And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
> Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
> O thou would'st joy to live in such a place.
> IV, 670-75

Keats would certainly have joyed to live in such a place. Of course it must have "a little river,"

> All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
> IV, 681

If that were not sufficient, he would bring to his love "Honey from out the gnarled hive," and gather for her "Apples, wan with sweetness." Keats spun a pastoral fantasia to woo the Indian maid.

The poetical wooing was vain; much that his love herself might have explained was unknown to the mountaineer. Her reply must have mystified him. Instead of responding to his pleas, she addressed Eros and reproached the god of love for condemning her to die. She complained Eros had been cruel and unjust. To Endymion she said,

"I may not be thy love: I am forbidden -"
IV, 752

She would not explain, although she feared an obscure vengeance might bring about their deaths. Therefore, she would bless and leave him.

The reader recognizes that Diana, the moon, must fade since he knows this conversation had begun

. . . just as the golden morrow
Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east.
IV, 726-27

As the morning light grew, they sought the seclusion of the forest. Without a protesting word from Endymion they wandered dolefully hand in hand, through the valleys and sat beneath a lone beech tree. Their eyes gazed unseeingly at the circle of leaves scattered about them on this autumn morning.

The poet paused for an apostrophe to Endymion. Keats' sympathy with sorrow appears once more in the promise to Endymion that he would soon be "ensky'd," and thus his happiness assured.

Ensky'd ere this, but truly I deem
Truth the best music in a first-born song.
IV, 772-73

Here is another instance of self-revelation. The poem must continue until all Keats must say had been written. He would be true to his purpose to bestow upon Endymion "immortal bliss." (III, 1024)

The poem continued in sorrowful mood. Throughout, the poet was speaking of his own experiences. Had the Carian only glanced away from the dead leaves, what joy he might have felt.

> . . . The spirit culls
> Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
> Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
> IV, 782-84

An especial interest is attached to succeeding lines which incorporate memories and fancies of Keats' "boyish days."

> A little onward ran the very stream
> By which he took his first soft poppy dream;
> And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
> A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent
> His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
> Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,
> But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
> Up which he had not fear'd the antelope;
> And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade
> He had not with tam'd leopards play'd;
> Nor could an arrow light, or javelin
> Fly in the air where his had never been
> And yet he knew it not. . . .
> IV, 785-97

Companioned by his ideal and nearing the end of his search for his radiant goddess, he was nevertheless lost in

melancholy. There was a smile in the maid's eye which he did not see; but he glanced upward and saw at last his sister Peona. It had been long since he had seen Peona, not since the day in April she had sung to him in the forest when he had started on his wanderings. "How dearly they embraced." (802) She sweetly welcomed her brother who had brought home a bride to his kingdom, as she thought. When Endymion continued to grieve, she promised him rest for a month, and isolation from prying tongues, and unsuccessfully attempted to interest him in the festival to Diana the shepherds were to celebrate that very night.

Finally she asked the Indian maid to help her arouse Endymion from despondency. Peona's question,

> . . . "Endymion, dear brother, say
> What ails thee?" . . .
>
> IV, 845-46

brought down upon him the impact of the full consciousness of the duties he must resume as prince of Caria. He had returned from a long search for beauty in the deepest deep and the farthest heights, and had soared in visions above mortality, and now, returning, was asked to resume the humdrum duties of ruling a shepherd clan. As Keats expressed this mood through intuitive poetic psychology,

> . . . He could bear no more, and so
> Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
> And twang'd it inwardly. . . .
> IV, 846-48

Afterwards he calmly explained to Peona that the normal pleasures of men were real, but that there were higher pleasures he would forfeit if he ruled an earthly realm. For these higher pleasures he must discipline himself; therefore he would dwell in a hermit's cell where only she might visit him. At the same time he confided to her care the Indian maid who accepted the proffered home and declared she would that night at the festival consecrate herself to serve as a priestess of Diana.

For awhile they all three felt like people in sleep, struggling with unhappy dreams and pretending such things were commonplace. Endymion was the first to arouse from this confusion, and bade the two maids good-bye. They started away dizzily. The shepherd prince called after them to stay, but too late. They were lost to sight in the woods, even as he was calling that he would meet them at evening in the sacred grove near Diana's temple. They were gone. He could endure no more. The suffering of the renunciation of his dreams was too great. He lay upon a grassy hillock all day in a mood of sluggish desolation,

> . . . save when he scantily lifted
> His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
> With the slow move of time, - sluggish and weary
> Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
> Had reach'd the river's brim. . . .
> IV, 920-24

The poet has made a dial hand of a certain group of poplars with their shadows stealing upon the sunny river, surely a rare figure.

At sunset Endymion arose and went to keep his tryst at the temple. He noticed all the beauties of the evening. At first in bitterness and then in resignation to his coming death, he lamented;

> "Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
> Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
> Before the serene father of them all
> Bows down his summer head below the west.
> Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
> But at the setting I must bid adieu
> To her for the last time. Night will strew
> On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
> And with them I shall die; nor much it grieves
> To die when summer dies on the cold ground."
> IV, 927-36

The story had developed according to the plan which the poet gave the reader in the Proem.

> . . . Let Autumn bold
> With universal tinge of sober gold,
> Be all about me when I make an end.
> I, 55-57

The gold had almost fallen. Less than one hundred lines remained to be composed before he could write opposite the last line in the manuscript of Endymion, the date, November, 28.[1]

There was momentarily a faint gleam of light-heartedness, the next moment darkened by a thought of retribution.

> "Why I have been a butterfly, a lord
> Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
> Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses:
> My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
> That I should die with it: so in all this
> We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heart-break, woe,
> What is there to plain of? By Titon's foe
> I am but rightly served." . . .
> IV, 937-44

The poet is about to dispose of his hero. A reader is reminded of the sentence in the Preface to Endymion, "It is just that this youngster should die away."

Convinced that sorrow was unwarranted, "What is there to plain of?" Endymion "tripp'd lightly" through autumn's beautiful scene, until he entered the holy grove of Diana where he expected to meet his doom. Its dusk engulfing him stirred in his soul rebellious thoughts that,

> . . . "I did wed
> Myself to things of light from infancy,"
> IV, 957-58

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1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 162

in reference probably to his worship of Diana's beauty;

> "And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
> Is sure enough to make a mortal man
> Grow impious." . . .
> IV, 959-61

Sunk in thoughts of the eternal mystery of life and death, and absorbed in reflections "for which no wording can be found," (962) he was "beyond the reach of music." (964) The vesper hymn to Diana floated full and soft from the forest temple. Thus he did not hear the music, nor see the two maids approaching in the pale light.

> . . . "Unhappy wight!
> Endymion!" said Peona, "we are here!
> What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?"
> Then he embraced her, and his lady's hand
> Pressed, saying: "Sister, I would have command,
> If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
> IV, 971-76

Then occurred an astonishing transformation. The "dark-eyed stranger" in a new voice "sweet as love," to Endymion's amazement, swore "by Cupid's dove" he should command all their fates. Whereupon, before his eyes she changed from black-haired Indian maid to the golden-haired Diana.

> . . . Aye, he beheld
> Phoebe, his passion! . . .
> IV, 986-87

And so the quest was ended, and the mystery solved. The Indian maid had been but a disguised incarnation of Diana herself. This was also the unknown whom he had loved. He knew her at last as his only love. She explained,

> . . . "Drear, drear
> Has our delaying been; but foolish fear
> Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;
> And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
> Thou should'st, my love, by some unlook'd for change
> Be spiritualized. . . .
> IV, 988-93

The goddess blessed Peona and promised her many future meetings in the forest through which Diana and Endymion would range. Diana extended gracious hands to the kneeling Endymion, and

> They vanished far away! Peona went
> Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.
> IV, 1002-3

"To wonder" is all that a mortal could do who had just seen the translation of a poet.

The atmosphere at the close as well as at the beginning of Book Four breathes sadness and weariness. The poem ended on no note of joy and exultation such as

might have been expected after the triumph of a union with supreme Beauty and the highest aspiration. The date, November 28, 1817, on the last page of the draft expressed the poet's relief on the completion of his seven-months' task. The line at the beginning of the fourth book,

> I move to the end in lowliness of heart,
> IV, 29

is sufficient evidence of the depressing feeling of incapability under which he labored.

The temperamental failing of the poet, an excess of ornament, was more prominent in this last book than in the earlier ones. Yet the final book is more thorough than preceding ones, and does bring the poem to a plausible ending. The poet's thought is maturing. This conclusion would explain the more quiet mood, the air of gentle sadness. His humility is touching:

> . . . but then I thought on poets gone,
> And could not pray:- nor could I now.
> IV, 27-28

With such self-abasement he began the conclusion of the great task he had set himself.

Throughout, the consummation of Endymion's search

for Beauty and the intensity of the poetic aspiration are blended. Aspiration soared beyond the bounds of reason, and left a hero sunk in apathy, who was aroused anew by the soul's thirst for love and beauty. Renunciation of his dream left him far gone in melancholy. A shrinking from contact with humanity merged into a state of exaltation above the world. He perceived that all beauties he had experienced were merged in one "essence," and he was one with the spirit of Beauty.

The most original conceptions in this book are found in the "Song of the Indian Maid" and in the flights of the winged horses, the most perfect description in the "Cave of Quietude." As I observed in my analysis of the "Ode to Sorrow," this poem is a union of two lyrics -- one, in manner an Elizabethan love lyric, and another, a pageant of Oriental splendor. For the Indian maid the Bacchic portion was only a passing splendor; she returned to the original mood. I think that is the explanation for Professor de Selincourt's writing that "the dominating emotion of the Ode . . . is felt in the allusions to the wild rose, the daisy, and cowslip, the glow worm and the nightingale. Phoebe has strayed far to find her poet; she has found him in an English wood."[1] From another point

1. De Selincourt, Ernest, Op. Cit., p. LXIII

of view a different purpose for the return to the original topic may be found. The theme which described the effect of sorrow and suffering in the spiritual development of a poet required that Endymion take Sorrow to his heart. The lyric consequently must return to the original strain, since the Hymn to Bacchus digressed from this poetic theme.

Another criticism of this "Ode to Sorrow" which is the opinion of a poet, should interest us. Robert Bridges would begin at the fifth stanza, thus omitting the stanzas Professor de Selincourt found most effective, and leave out also the third stanza from the last.[1] His opinion is directly opposed to de Selincourt's. "The pictorial description of the Bacchic procession," wrote Bridges, "is unmatched for life, wide motion, and romantic, dreamy Orientation, while the concluding stanzas returning to the first movement are as lovely as any Elizabethan lyric, and in the same manner." In my opinion they are both right. Each section of the poem deserves the praise the individual critic bestowed upon it.

"The Cave of Quietude" is the pall that the shapes of beauty moves away "from our dark spirits." (I, 13) It

1. Ellershaw, Henry, Keats, Poetry, and Prose, with Essays by Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Robert Bridges, and Others, with an Introduction and Notes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1922, p. 29

is an oft-repeated experience of Endymion to be buried in despondency. The first trance came upon him when he had striven

> To hide the cankering venom that had riven
> His fainting recollections. . . .
> I, 396-97

At another time when the experience was related in verse, Endymion had just seen the vision of Cybele, and had delayed in that "mournful place." (II, 650) He could go no farther, and with an appeal to heaven committed himself to the gloom. The eagle which Jove sent, bore him to a place of enchantment,

> . . . where little caves were wreath'd
> So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd
> Large honeycombs of green, and freshly teem'd
> With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
> The eagle landed him, and farewell took.
> II, 665-69

Once again communing "with a melancholy thought," (II, 868) he had hidden in "a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast." (II, 878) There while his past life, "Passed like a dream before him," (II, 894) the humming of the water in Alpheus' pursuit of Arethusa, sang "his dream away." This was a type of sluggish despair which Keats' letters testify he was well acquainted with. To the friend with whom he

stayed during the summer weeks he was engaged in writing the third book he wrote in the late fall, "I beg now my dear Bailey that hereafter should you observe anything cold in me not to put it to the account of heartlessness but abstraction - for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a passion or affection during a whole week - and so long this sometimes continues I begin to suspect myself and the genuineness of my feelings."[1]

In this final book Endymion entered this den of "remotest gloom," (515) and found repose so vital to his restoration from despondency. Keats pictured a state of spiritual exhaustion, but through it he created a full image of stillness.

> O happy spirit home! O wondrous soul!
> Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
> In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
> For, never since thy griefs and woes began
> Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
> Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
> IV, 543-48

This book is full of descriptions of moods; for instance, apathy figured in the description of the "Cave of Quietude." (524-45) Another, a mood of bitterness and rebellion, was described when Endymion realized at the last that he was forsaken and must die. (952-62) A mood

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 69

of indifference was shown when he had returned to the forest (766-97) from whence he had started on his wanderings and sat, perhaps beneath the very beech tree where the Druid priest had made the sacrifice. (I, 159)

Professor Thorpe's statement that Book Four represents "an adventure which brings about a complete union of the soul with the heart of humanity"[1] is true. Endymion had entered into the deepest sympathy with the sorrows of humanity. That was the last step in poetic insight which would bring him to "A fellowship with essence." (I, 779) But the critic has not included in his interpretation the remainder of Keats' Platonic thought,

> . . . till we shine
> Full alchemiz'd, and free of space . . .
> I, 779-80

a portion which has been recognized by Professor Finney. The immortality which the complete union with Beauty would bring the poetic spirit was perceived by Professor Finney. His interpretation that Book Four "is a neo-Platonic quest of immortality through love"[2] is correct. One interpretation supplements the other. The quest for immortality had

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1. See above, p. 17
2. See above, p. 17

been attained through love, and he was "free of space."

The psychological experiences must be self-revealing. For example, near the close of the poem Endymion sunk in thoughts for which "no wording can be found," (962) was also the poet who said in the "Hymn to Pan" that there were solitary thoughts which

> . . . dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
> Then leave the naked brain. . . .
> I, 294-96

Finally, in spite of confusion of details and actions, there shone through all the intense sincerity of the poet bent on gaining experience and straining his powers to fathom the secrets of life that eluded his searching. The beauty for which he had been searching was embodied in the moon goddess who combined the beauty of sensuous love, the beauty of friendship and the beauty of sorrow and sympathy. When the poetic soul was at last united with Beauty, he had gained the vision through a sympathy with life. With thought so inspired he was transported with beauty to the skies. Peona, the mortal, could only wonder. It was not for her to follow.

CHAPTER VII

THE FATE OF ENDYMION

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THE FATE OF ENDYMION

A Path Through the Wilderness
(See I, 59-62)

When Endymion was published in April, 1818, it met with no kindly reception. Efforts of the young literary men who were Keats' friends to protect its fame were of no avail against the prejudice of powerful partisan journals unwilling to accord a fair hearing to John Keats, a disciple of their political opponent Leigh Hunt. The adverse reviews in the great Tory organs, Blackwood's and the Quarterly, were the greatest obstacle to its sale. In Blackwood's an unsigned review dismissed it as "calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling."[1] In the Quarterly, the review was even more coldly insulting. The editor of the latter, professed to find Endymion unreadable. "We have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story appears to be, to get through it . . . We have not been able to struggle beyond the first book."[2] He declared he was unable to get at the meaning of even the first book, and doubted the identity of the author since he could not believe that "any man in his senses would put his name

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1. Hewlett, Dorothy, Op. Cit., p. 182
2. Ibid., p. 182

to such a rhapsody." While he admitted the author had "powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius," he still found the poem "unintelligible and diffuse."

For years those opinions, that Endymion was meaningless although full of beautiful poetry, that it was diffuse and formless, stuck in the minds of would-be readers. In the early days of its publication the first reaction of Shelley who might have been expected to understand the poem, was that "no person could possibly get to the end of it. Yet it is full of the finest gleams of poetry! indeed everything seems to be viewed by the mind of a poet which is described in it."[1] A later reading brought to Shelley somewhat more satisfaction.

The second comment which we have from Shelley, came about in this manner. In July, 1820, Shelley sent Keats an invitation to visit him in Rome. It appears from Shelley's letter that having been informed of the younger poet's illness, he had dwelt upon Keats' misfortunes until his thoughts had prompted him to look into Endymion. "I have lately read your Endymion again," he wrote, "and ever with a new sense of the treasures it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion."[2] Even

1. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 238
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 506

today with this criticism most casual readers of Endymion will agree. Nevertheless it is possible for an attentive reader to follow many clues winding through the "indistinct profusion" to the treasure, the inner meaning of the poem. As an illustration of the possibilities of such reading, I shall draw out for comment from this labyrinth of beautiful poetry only one thread, and that a thread which gives a clue to the poet's design for the fate of Endymion, as we follow its gleam winding through the fourth book. Through this explanation I hope to disprove to some extent that portion of criticism accepted by many for a hundred years that Endymion is unintelligible and formless.

At the close of the third book, Endymion was standing beside a placid lake in his native Caria, happy since a voice audible only to "his inward senses" (III, 1020) had aroused him from unconsciousness with a promise that, he would soon be with his goddess in "endless heaven." He was not to die as a mortal, but to be given "immortal bliss." (III, 1024) The promise of immortality was repeated in the middle of the final book when the poet wrote,

> Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
> Me to behold thee thus in last extreme;
> Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem
> Truth the best music in a first-born song.
> IV, 770-73

Earlier in the fourth book the disastrous results of his yielding to an earthly love had been prophesied at the beginning of his association with the Indian maid who must be thought of as a symbol of human love. The warning had been sounded that an immortal must resist the mortal, or physical love.

> . . . Vanish into air,
> Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear
> A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
> IV, 53-55

The question implied that there was more to the situation than sympathy for a beautiful, grief-stricken woman, something which he did not perceive. He was admonished that the heavenly love would admit no divided allegiance.

> See not her charms! Is Phoebe passionless?
> Phoebe is fairer far. - O gaze no more.
> IV, 56-57

He did not heed the counsel; yet he recognized that the effect of his yielding to the influence of the earthly love would result in holding him in the grasp of mortality.

> O pardon me, for I am full of grief -
> Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
> Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
> I was to top the heavens. . . .
> IV, 107-10

Endymion had told the Indian maid that if he yielded to his love of her, she would be his executioner.

> . . . Dear maid, sith
> Thou art my executioner, and I feel
> Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
> Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
> And all my story that much passion slew me;
> . . . . . .
> . . . let me understand
> How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.
> IV, 110-114, 117-118

Still another warning that love for the Indian maid invited destruction was sounded. It was Mercury's voice that rang through the deep forest, uttering in a most fearful tone the terrifying, "Woe to that Endymion!" (IV, 321) After that lament as they sat "waiting for some destruction," (IV, 330) Endymion and his earthly love in a dream were carried to the sky. It was there that he fancied he saw the goddess while he was still companioned by the beautiful Indian maid.

It was evident the Indian maid was contented with mortality; she did not realize that in mortality lay destruction.

> Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
> This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st
> Pillowed in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
> What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
> IV, 465-68

Since Endymion had never before believed himself to see the goddess and the Indian maid at the same time, he could not recognize their identities. His inability to choose between the heavenly love and the earthly love brought him into a state worse than perplexity. His nature was torn in two by his distress, and he anticipated "some fearful end." (IV, 478) Nevertheless he attempted another flight with the mortal, they both being "so witless of their doom." (IV, 492) It was understood that the earthly love must die, and that only through a union with a heavenly love could he live eternally.

The theme that earthly love produced death was explained further when the goddess who Endymion thought was the Indian maid, declaimed against the cruelty of Eros. She cried to the god of love,

> Young feathered tyrant! by a swift decay
> Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
> And I do think that at my very birth
> I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly.
> IV, 730-33

To escape the vengeance of death, the goddess, whom Endymion still believes to be the Indian maid, insisted that they must separate.

Almost at once Peona came to Endymion's aid, as

she had come in Book One when he was grieving for his lost dream. The exclamation, "Can she endure!" (IV, 801) indicated how great a distance he had traveled from reality. So long had he been lost in visions, that Peona told him,

> Many upon thy death have ditties made.
> IV, 836

Whenever Peona, practical and affectionate, appeared in the story, she exerted an influence to allay his fever and anxiety, or to curb his striving after the unattainable. Peona had not been seen in the story since the close of the first book. On that occasion, in her effort to appease Endymion's disappointment over losing the vision of love which he had glimpsed once, she had reminded him,

> . . . Would I so tease
> My pleasant days, because I could not mount
> Into those regions? . . .
> I, 745-47

Now as he was nearing the end of his last journey, Endymion informed Peona that he must forsake earthly pleasures if he would gain a heavenly love, that

> . . . those deceptions which for pleasure go
> 'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:
> But there are higher ones I may not see,
> If impiously an earthly realm I take.
> IV, 851-54

Having seen the light, he must be faithful to the revelation. This conversation followed his disillusioning flight with the Indian maid. We recall that he had said,

> . . . I have clung
> To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
> Or felt but a great dream! . . .
> IV, 636-38

Now, he was explaining to his sister,

> Since I saw thee, I have been awake
> Night after night, and day after day, until
> Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
> Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
> More happy than betides mortality.
> IV, 855-59

The time approached for the separation which Endymion's companion had said they must undergo. Endymion, his companion unrecognized as the goddess, and Peona are pictured as

> Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
> By thinking it a thing of yes or no,
> That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
> Was struck, and all were dreamers.
> IV, 897-900

They went their separate ways, he to brood the day long over his departure. With the fall of night he would be immortalized; a kind of divine justice had decreed he would

pass away with his kingdom, which had been the green earth.

Evening came gently. Muffled music was dying in their ears. The three met in the dark forest. To Peona's question,

> "What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?"
> IV, 973

the wanderer replied,

> . . . "Sister, I would have command,
> If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
> IV, 975-76

At that moment his eyes were opened. He then understood that by renunciation of an earthly love and an earthly kingdom he had won command over their fate. He saw the Indian maid as the incarnation of Diana, and knew that the goddess he had glimpsed in his early vision, the earthly love, and the heavenly goddess were one. At last he realized that in loving one, he had loved all three. The objects of his affection were united in the person of one, to the poet's eye the supreme beauty, the goddess Diana. In full communion with Beauty the poetic soul had become "a floating spirit," (I, 797) and Endymion and Diana disappeared forever.

The goddess had declared that through some process he must be "spiritualized." (IV, 993) Through renunciation of an earthly love he had achieved immortality. In its highest sublimation he had found all love to be Beauty, and to be one "essence." It is the life and ideals of a poet which have been the theme,

> . . . one who through this middle earth shall pass
> Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
> His name upon the harp-string. . .
> I, 723-25

This solution was deliberately evolved. In the famous passage (I, 777-842) which I have referred to as the Gradations of Happiness passage, Keats had stated his thoughts on love and beauty as well as he could phrase them in the first stage of his writing. If, as he wrote, he was not actuated by anything base or unsound,

> . . . nothing base,
> No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
> The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd,
> I, 770-72

then the question arises -- what guided him in the composition of the poem? The answer lies in the four succeeding lines (I, 777-80) which he sent his publisher during the printing. Besides the four lines to be incorporated in

the poem, the letter he addressed to John Taylor, the publisher, January 30, 1818, contained these observations. "You must indulge me by putting this in for setting aside the badness of the other, such a preface is necessary to the subject. The whole thing must I think have appeared to you, who are a consequitive Man, as a thing almost of mere words -- but I assure you when I wrote it it was regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth."[1] These are the lines written to preface the passage, a question and a philosophic reply.

> Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
> Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
> Full alchemiz'd, and free of space.
> I, 777-80

In this way the poet had foretold the culmination of Endymion's experiences. All his searching had no more substantiality than a dream. The visions which had carried him into the depths of the earth, beneath the sea, and far into the air had shown him beauty. He had perceived Beauty; beauty which he had known through nature, through sensual love, through friendship, and through sympathy with human sorrow, he saw at the last was all one in "essence,"

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1. Ibid., p. 91

and immortal. The emphasis is on the forever, in the famous line,

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

As we review the long philosophical passage in Book One (I, 777-842), we see that having sung of the beauty in nature, in old songs and mythological stories, the poet asked a second question, to be followed as before by a philosophical explanation.

> Feel we these things? - that moment have we stept
> Into a sort of oneness, and our state
> Is like a floating spirit's.
> I, 795-97

Assuredly at the moment of his translation Endymion had felt "these things," and had "stept into a sort of oneness."

The struggling poet had been unweariedly plumbing the depths of his thinking and reaching upward as far as imagination could carry his visions to arrive at a complete communion with Beauty. His testimony to this effect may be read in the letter to Bailey dated one week before the completion of Endymion. "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth . . . whether it existed before or not, . . . for I have the same idea of all our Passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential

Beauty."[1] Keats, as he traced the story of Endymion, had believed that the passion of love in its sublime degree was creative of essential and permanent beauty. The pursuit of Beauty through gradations of love had guided him through the poem. Its attainment had left Endymion, "Full alchemized, and free of space." (I, 780)

1. Ibid., p. 67

CHAPTER VIII

RECENT CRITICISM IN THE LIGHT OF THIS ANALYSIS

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As a result of the analysis and interpretation of Endymion certain conclusions have been established respecting those phases of criticism which are of interest to modern critics of the poem. Since opinions of these critics were assembled and reviewed in a preceding chapter, the present chapter will define the extent to which these conclusions conform with the critical judgments reviewed in the former chapter. It will be recalled that recent criticism was presented under four headings. In presenting the findings, I shall adhere to the same plan and order, and shall use for evidence to confirm these conclusions the preceding analysis and interpretation.

Professor Finney has pointed out elements of neo-Platonic philosophy in Endymion.[1] My analysis of the poem confirms Professor Finney's conclusion that Keats' thought was deeply touched by neo-Platonism. In fact, I find that Professor Finney's few quotations may be

1. Finney's explanatory statement of the philosophy and a quotation from Endymion used by the critic in support of his premise, are quoted on p. 17

supplemented by numerous others, several of which I quote below. To sustain this opinion, then, I have selected three quotations from the poem.[1]

In the first instance, just before Endymion was translated, Diana explained the delay in their union with this Platonic thought,

> And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
> Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change
> Be spiritualized. . .
>
> IV, 991-93

The neo-Platonists taught that the soul of man was engaged in a quest to be re-united with God, or Original Essence, a state to be attained after death, and that real existence was spiritual.[2] Hence, a passage in the first book may be cited for further confirmation of neo-Platonic influence in Endymion. In this second citation, Endymion was explaining to Peona his seeming indifference to wordly ambition. Keats' hero, wanderer and dreamer on the earth, attempted to convince his practical sister Peona of the power of Love.

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1. Other quotations for the same purpose can be found easily
2. Finney, Claude Lee, "Keats' Philosophy of Beauty: An Interpretation of Endymion in the Light of the Neo-Platonism of Spenser," p. 5

> . . . What merest whim
> Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
> To one who keeps within his stedfast aim
> A love immortal, an immortal too.
> I, 846-49

That is, Endymion as well as the love, is immortal.

> Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true,
> And never can be born of atomies
> That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
> Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
> My restless spirit never could endure
> To breed so long upon one luxury,
> Unless it did, though fearfully espy
> A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
> I, 850-57

In addition to the neo-Platonic doctrine of the immortality of man to be attained through a union with God after death, Professor Finney saw an analogy between the neo-Platonic ecstasy and the vision or dreams of Endymion.[1] The same critic explained the neo-Platonic ecstasy as a vision through which man "during his earthly existence loses his sensuous perceptions of the ever-changing world of matter" and "stands naked in the presence of the beauty of God.[2] Further instances of this union of the wanderer's soul with heaven can be found easily. For an example, Peona, having failed to win Endymion's

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1. Ibid., p. 8
2. See above, p. 17

confidence, had chided him in these words,

> . . . Brother, 'tis vain to hide
> That thou dost know of things mysterious,
> Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
> Weigh down thy nature; . . .
> I, 505-8

and he had replied that in enchanted surroundings before

> . . . a magic bed
> Of sacred ditamy and poppies red,
> I, 554-55

he had thought until his "head was dizzy and distraught" (565) and then had fallen asleep.

> . . . Ah, can I tell
> The enchantment that afterward befel?
> Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream
> That never tongue, although it over-teem
> With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring
> Could figure out and to conception bring,
> All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
> Watching the zenith, where the milky way
> Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;
> And traveling my eye, until the doors
> Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
> I became loth and fearful to alight
> From such high soaring by a downward glance:
> So kept me stedfast in that airy trance
> Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
> I, 572-86

Furthermore, when the statement is considered that the neo-Platonic quest for beauty in Endymion was motivated by the neo-Platonic ecstasy or dream, it will be recalled

that in the first book Endymion briefly related his vision to Peona. In the other books the reader accompanied Endymion through the dreams. In each case Endymion was seeking beauty, the eternal quest, through love. That thought was very plainly stated in the lines which were quoted on page 105.

> O love! how potent hast thou been to teach,
> Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells
> . . . . . .
> Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won:
> III, 92-93, 96

The whole "neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty and love which he had assimilated from Spenser,"[1] was stated explicitly in Book One, 777-842. And so it may be seen, that Keats imbibed from the Elizabethan masters, a philosophy which pervades the poem.

My study has convinced me that this philosophy, from which arises much of the action of the poem, touched Keats' real being profoundly. Endymion was published in April, 1818. That month the poet wrote to Taylor, his publisher and friend, "I find that I can have no enjoyment in the World but continual drinking of Knowledge - I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good

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1. Finney, Claude Lee, "Keats' Philosophy of Beauty: An Interpretation of Endymion in the Light of the Neo-Platonism of Spenser," p. 6

for the world . . . the road lies through application study and thought. I will pursue it and to that end propose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy - were I calculated for the former I should be glad -- but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter."[1] As he wrote that he had been "hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy," we may safely conclude that nothing except his love of natural scenes had meant so much to him during the preceding months when he was writing Endymion as had his desire to establish in his thinking satisfactory answers to those philosophical questions of the essential nature of love and beauty.[2] It is my opinion that in this effort may be found the cause of much of the confusion for which Keats has been censured. However, the flashes of insight, sudden illuminations, scattered throughout the poem are the happiest result of his philosophic tendency. I quote in support of this opinion a sentence from Sidney Colvin, "But in his search he strikes now and again, for the attentive reader, notes of far-reaching symbolic significance that carry the mind to the verge of the great mysteries of things."[3]

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., pp. 134-35
2. See above, p. 43
3. Colvin, Sidney, Op. Cit., p. 238

The effect of this philosophy when not taken into account in reading Keats' poem, has been to bewilder an unprepared reader. The hero hears "airy voices" and falls into a trance. How many readers would recognize the rhapsodic ecstasy of neo-Platonism? The argument is stated in Book I, 777-842. Who reading the poem for the first time could see in these lines four psychological steps in the attainment of a union with Love, or would be aware of the meaning Keats attached to such words as "essence," "intensity," "alchemiz'd?" Who would have any conception of what was intended by the phrase "a floating spirit?" Yet that phrase states the condition Endymion was destined to achieve. Again in Book Four, think of the confusion of identity with which the reader must struggle when he reads of the Indian maid, the goddess, and Peona. Would one be likely to identify upon a first reading, Diana, the goddess Endymion met in the journey underground, and the Indian maid as the same? Accordingly it is only when one understands the abstract truth embodied in Keats' sensuous symbols that he can appreciate the poem.[1]

1. Attention has been directed to the neo-Platonism derived from the Elizabethan poets which may be seen in Endymion, but there are other qualities of this poem which have their inspiration in the neo-Platonic philosophy. A more detailed study of neo-Platonism in Endymion should be made.

Therefore, a study of Endymion leads to an endorsement of Professor Finney's thesis that Keats expressed in the poem a neo-Platonic philosophy which he is said to have grasped from the Elizabethan masters. This had the most direct bearing (1) on the hero's quest for beauty through love, (2) on motivating the activity through the trances or dreams, and (3) on producing the obscurity which the unfamiliar and indistinct principles engendered.

A review of the critical judgments on the question of an allegorical interpretation of Endymion, the second phase of criticism reviewed in the first chapter, recited the opinions of three authorities in favor of such an interpretation and one opposed. The first in point of time was Professor Thorpe's interpretation of the allegory based on the "Wherein lies Happiness?" (I, 777-842) I agree with his statement that this passage "above all others shows allegory."[1] My analysis of Book One shows that this philosophical passage defines four steps to the attainment of happiness, an achievement which produces a "fellowship with essence," (779) in effect, immortality or a union with ultimate Beauty. The steps are gradations in the appreciation of beauty through love, each step a

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1. See above, p. 15

"richer entanglement." (798) The first is the beauty of nature; then the beauty of old songs and myths is praised. A third and greater "enthralment" (798) is friendship; the fourth and highest good is love. A soul that has "felt these things" (795) is "free of space" (780) and one with Beauty.

For all that, it is difficult to find sufficient explanation of Professor Thorpe's using Truth instead of Beauty as the object of Endymion's quest. So far as I can ascertain, Keats used the word truth in a metaphysical sense once in his letters, and once in the famous line which closes the Ode on a Grecian Urn,

Beauty is truth, truth beauty . . .

written eighteen months after the completion of Endymion. The first reference is found in the letter to Bailey which was quoted in part,[1] "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not - for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime creative of essential Beauty."[2] His capitalization is an index to the importance Keats attaches to the word. The Preem defines Beauty, not Truth.

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1. See above, p. 42
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 67

Certainly it mattered not what the object of the quest might be; it would still be true as Professor Thorpe writes, "In the end he finds united in one ideal the vision which drew him on in pursuit of each."[1]

Professor Finney finds the basis for his interpretation of an allegory in the famous passage, (I, 777-842) and interprets it as the neo-Platonic quest for immortality. My interpretation is in the main in agreement with his view.

When the third critic, J. Middleton Murry, counts the passage (I, 777-842) as of little importance and esteems the Cave of Quietude (IV, 512-51) as of greater value in interpretation of the allegory, I must dissent from his opinion. My analysis of Book Four shows that the experience defined in the beautiful description known as the "Cave of Quietude" was not an isolated instance. It represented a retreat into some spiritual haven until the soul was freed of a crushing burden of despondency. It had been anticipated in the Proem.[2] The first trance followed a submergence in gloom; the vision of Cybele as well as Endymion's meeting with Arethusa and Alpheus came after spells of apathetic despair. The critic has over-emphasized the relation of this part to the whole.

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1. See above, p. 17
2. See I, 8-13

Notcutt's explanation which is the most elaborate yet advanced, is the least credible.[1] Keats was not a man to brood over past perplexities, certainly not to the extent of writing an allegory of four thousand words about a decision he had made a year previous to pursue the path of poetry. Besides his letters show that he was striving to formulate his ideas on aesthetics, was interested in abstractions, or philosophical thoughts on the nature of Beauty and Love.

In a review of Professor Notcutt's book, Professor Thorpe wrote in respect to allegorizing "the awakening of English poetry from the stultification of eighteenth century conventionalism to a new appreciation of nature" that Notcutt was on "decidedly debatable ground, a fact which he appears frequently to forget."[2] And he continued, "It might be all right if it could be established Keats meant Circe to represent Pope and meant the awakening of Glaucus to symbolize the restoration of English poetry to its pristine quality." He concluded that most readers will feel that Endymion ought not be made to bear so great an overload of allegory. In the words of Professor Thorpe,

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1. See above, pp. 20-25
2. Thorpe, Clarence De Witt, Review of "Endymion, A Poetic Romance by John Keats, with Introduction and Notes by H. Clement Notcutt," Modern Language Notes, 44:337-39, May, 1929, p. 338

the interpretation is "untested and too little provable."[1]

Another reviewer, Helen Darbishire, writing in the Review of English Studies, expressed the opinion held by Professor Thorpe, of their being "no scrap of evidence Keats meant any of these things."[2] She refers particularly to the more startling features of Notcutt's explanation. "Circe is the eternal enchantress who turns men into beasts. Is that pointless nonsense? Is it not truth enough? Do we reach significant truth only when we see her as Alexander Pope? Must poetic imagery be about anything? Need poetry mean anything but itself? Ought we to ask more of a 'Poetic Romance' than it be both romance and poetry? We only ask more if the poet means more. That Keats meant more is certainly true. All the best critics agree. Each has said Endymion is the poet's soul seeking through painful experiences a union with the ideal."[3] We can agree with her designation of Notcutt's explanation as "a laboured exposition."

There remains one critic who has expressed an opinion on the allegory in Endymion, Amy Lowell, who asserts,

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1. Ibid., p. 389
2. Darbishire, Helen, Review of "Endymion, A Poetic Romance, with Introduction and Notes by H. Clement Notcutt," Review of English Studies, 485-87, October 14, 1928, p.485
3. Ibid., p. 486

"There is no trace of allegory to be found anywhere in his works."[1] With several such positive statements which diverge widely from my analysis, I shall venture to disagree. In this case, I first call attention to the generally accepted fact that the characters represent qualities; the moon, Cynthia, Diana, his ideal of Beauty. Endymion is the poet. In fact, the sister Peona declared he was a poet. (I, 723) Keats outlined his allegory in what he said were "gradations of Happiness," (I, 777-842) and wrote of the passage that it was "the greatest service to him" of anything he had ever done.[2] The allegory, according to my reading, represents a search for ultimate Beauty through love. The broad outline of the allegory may be found on pages 137 and 182, but the entire analysis seems to show that it has an underlying motive. The interpretation of a part of the fourth book certainly supports an allegory.

Although Amy Lowell more than once called the well-known interpretative passage (I, 777-842), "Keats' creed,"[3] her argument is not convincing. Her contention is that Keats arranged for himself and his readers, the importance the passage was to assume. After the completion of the

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1. See above, p. 25
2. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 91
3. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 357

poem he sent to Taylor, the publisher, a request to insert in the poem four lines (I, 777-80), and explained the importance that the argument had assumed for him.[1] Amy Lowell considers that the poet's sentiments in the letter were only a rationalization for what he felt he ought to have provided for Endymion. I am unable to understand a sincere student's writing of Endymion, as Amy Lowell does, "that it [the passage, I, 777-842] fits nothing, and nowhere, and must therefore be regarded as camouflage."[2] I have found that this passage was necessary for interpretation of the poem. Two sections were essential to elucidate the allegory in the fourth book,[3] and other portions were necessary for the exposition of certain portions of the poem.

Furthermore, I notice that this critic wrote, "Keats was concerned with poetry as an art, not as a tract."[4] Everyone will agree that he was concerned with poetry as an art. He was more than concerned; he was an ardent student of the art of poetry. Some of those he thought the greatest artists, however, such as Spenser and Drayton, whom he was studying wholeheartedly had deliberately practiced an allegorical art. Hence, Keats would not have opposed allegory as inartistic.

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1. See above, p. 199
2. See above, p. 26
3. See above, pp. 184-85
4. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 456

To sum up, the critics who discuss the question of an allegorical interpretation of Endymion, with the exception of Amy Lowell, find the key to the allegory in a particular passage. With Professor Thorpe and Professor Finney, I find much with which to agree. With another, J. Middleton Murry, I disagree as to the relative value of the passage (IV, 512-51) which he used for interpretation, compared with another passage (I, 777-842) that I found of greater importance.

The next point to be considered is the critics' evaluation of the psychological significance of Endymion. Amy Lowell's work appeared first of those who have been concerned with the psychological phase of the criticism of Endymion. I can agree with the other critics whose opinions were noted, Professor Thorpe and J. Middleton Murry, so that no comment is needed. I am, also in agreement with Amy Lowell's affirmation that Endymion is "a psychological piece of no mean significance."[1] The fact that an allegory is explained is proof of the psychological intent. The numerous occasions when I have paused in the analysis to comment on the revelation of the poet's thought are evidence.[2] Yet I am unable to discover her reason for

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1. Ibid., p. 387
2. Such instances may be seen in II, 160-63, p. 77; IV, 475-81, pp. 150-51; IV, 639-45, p. 156

stating, "There is not the slightest hint of psychology in the Third Book."[1] Lines 162-174 in Book Three are psychological, especially 170-73.[2] The entire rhapsody on the power the moon had exercised over his fancy must be accepted as true and psychological. When Keats wrote, as he did in the lines to which I have referred,

> O what a wild and harmonized tune
> My spirit struck from all the beautiful!
> On some bright essence could I lean and lull
> Myself to immortality: I prest
> Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.
> III, 170-74

what is one to think except that he is writing of his poetic, or creative inspiration?

Akin to this psychological interest in Endymion, is the fact that every reader of Keats' letters, and it is fairly conceded that without a knowledge of these no student of Keats could come to a just conclusion -- every reader, I repeat, must recognize that the youthful poet was struggling with all his heart and mind to formulate replies to questions as profound as philosophical thought undertakes to answer. Both the Endymion and the extant letters to his friends during the year 1817 almost force a conclusion sympathetic to those who maintain that Keats had a

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 414
2. See above, p. 109

philosophic bent. Therefore, it appears unjust to speak of Keats, as Miss Lowell does, as a type, one of that great number of "boys of twenty-one, in love with the sensuous in nature and letters, and who make no secret of their predilections."[1]

There remains one subject of recent Endymion criticism, the morphology of the poem. It appears to me that the poem shows more evidence of careful planning than has been generally conceded. A paragraph quoted from Claude Lee Finney's most recent publication, The Evolution of Keats' Poetry[2] assembled the facts that can be gleaned from the letters of Keats and his friends. Internal evidence, too, is sufficient to warrant a student's believing the poem was more carefully arranged than is apparent upon a first reading.

Once again I must reject Amy Lowell's criticism. When she asserts that Endymion is chaotic, because "Keats was chaotic at the time he wrote it,"[3] if "chaotic" means "utterly disordered and confused," then I think neither Endymion nor Keats was "chaotic." As I have stated before,[4] the analysis has convinced me that the apparent confusion

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 415
2. See above, p. 32
3. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 415
4. See above, p. 192

arises from profusion of imagery and words, from implied Platonic abstractions, rather than from lack of purpose or of plan. Let us review the more obvious indications of a plan in Endymion. First, the Proem contains every element to be used later in the poem;[1] second, the introduction to each book contains the theme the poet was developing in the succeeding one thousand lines. In Book One the underlying theme may be seen in ll.34-35; in Book Two, l.1; in Book Three, ll.56-57; and in Book Four, ll.77-82. Third, a carefully worked-out symbolism showed Endymion's search for Beauty ever broadening his capacity for Love. At first, the love he expressed was entirely personal. Then he was brought out of his self-absorption through sympathies with the difficulties of others, evoked first through the Arethusa and Alpheus myth. The Glaucus and Scylla episode was the means through which Endymion acquired wisdom and a broader sympathy. At the last he understood love as impersonal, and his nature felt a sympathy with the sorrows of all humanity. Fourth, as additional evidence of planning, I submit the exposition of the philosophy of Endymion's fate in the design of the last five hundred lines of Book Four.[2] Concerning this

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1. See above, p. 49
2. See above, Chapter VI

portion of the poem, Amy Lowell writes, "Keats laid philosophy aside and ended with a pure story;"[1] whereas it seemed to me that he remembered his philosophy to the final word.

Still another criticism by Amy Lowell of the plan of this poem with which I do not find myself in full accord is her statement that, if one judged Endymion "as a long poem with a beginning, a middle, and an end, it was a failure."[2] Although confusion is admitted in a poem where on every page gleams pure and true inspiration, the problem of the quest of the poetic soul for complete communion with Beauty is accomplished. In very general terms, the story began with a melancholy prince sighing for the Beauty he had once seen for brief moments. It continued with his transport of the blissful heavenly vision. Immediately afterwards the hero was touched with sympathy for the woes of others. From that point onward he redeemed others,-- Glaucus, the thousands of other lovers, and the Indian maid -- until he saved himself. The poem ended when he was in loving sympathy with humanity, when he was "etherealized."

Finally, having commented on the present day critical

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1. Lowell, Amy, Op. Cit., vol. I, p. 458
2. Ibid., p. 460

opinion concerning the allegorical or symbolic meaning of the poem, I am convinced that those who read Endymion with the greatest delight will be aware of a hidden, unifying element of symbolism. That recognition will not dull their enjoyment of the incidental beauties of lyrical passages, and suggestive flashes of prophetic inspiration; on the contrary Endymion will exert a new hold upon their attention as soon as they perceive that they are dealing with a tentative spiritual parable.

The keynote of the poem was never struck with greater emphasis than in the first line,

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

With the greatest economy of words Keats declared his faith in the permanence of beauty, and then proceeded to imagine the poet's quest for immortal Beauty. He saw beauty in all things, but that was only to enable him to perceive the principle which was the object of his devotion, the "mighty abstract Idea . . . of Beauty in all things"[1] he called it. What he had said in his poetic youth was his aspiration of a complete poetic life, became the consolation of his brief existence. Near the end of his days the poet wrote, "If I should die I have left no

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1. Forman, Maurice Buxton, Op. Cit., p. 241

immortal work behind me . . . but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd."[1] In the poem the quest was ended when Endymion had won immortality. The wandering hero had been told,

> . . . He ne'er is crown'd
> With immortality, who fears to follow
> Where airy voices lead. . . .
> II, 211-13

That summons, too, had come to the poet who had "fled into the fearful deep," (II, 217) of thought. Through appreciation of the power of love, his hero had perceived beauty in nature, in sensuous love, in friendship, in sympathy with the woes of humanity, and had achieved immortality. When Venus met him in the region undersea, she had declared significantly,

> . . . Since the hour
> I met thee in earth's bower, all my power
> Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
> Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net?
> III, 904-7

In this last line is condensed the entire narrative of the poem.

Yet, after all, Keats did not write Endymion to

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1. Ibid., p. 468

compose an allegory. He wrote Endymion out of his heart to win poetic fame. A dispirited young man, nearing the end of a great task he had set himself, wrote to a friend that when done the poem "would take him but a dozen paces towards the Temple of Fame."[1] If we will but turn away, from all that others have written about Endymion, we shall hear the poet's view, "Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading: which may be food for a Week's stroll in the Summer?"[2] There sparkles the illuminating phrase. It is, in truth, "food for a Week's stroll in the Summer."

1. Ibid., p. 52
2. Ibid., p. 52

CONCLUSION

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Two questions were proposed for the present study of Endymion: What did the poet say? And, What did he mean? As a result the study includes both analysis and criticism. The analysis of the four books of the poem follows a summary of the recent criticism and a history of the writing of Endymion. In addition to these chapters, there is an interpretation of a part of the fourth book, as well as a final chapter reviewing the recent criticism.

The analysis which traces the narrative of the hero's journeys in search of beauty was concluded when Endymion had achieved a union with supreme Beauty, and thereby won immortality. It is summed up in the line,

> Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net.
> III, 907

The poem is allegorical. Endymion's story is a search for beauty motivated by love. The process is defined by the poet in the Gradations of Happiness passage. (I, 777-842) Book One presents a full realization of sensuous beauty;[1] Book Two interprets the power of sensual love to further

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1. See above, p. 67

the artist's growth and insight;[1] Book Three portrays the poetic soul as gaining a broader conception of beauty through sympathy and friendship;[2] Book Four represents the hero as united with Beauty through a complete sympathy with humanity's sorrows.[3] In the quest for beauty Endymion had been guided by love which gradually became more general and more impersonal until he was "spiritualiz'd." (IV, 995) Thus the hero escaped from the material chains which bound him and soared with the spirit of beauty, Diana, into higher regions. He had achieved immortality through a search for Beauty motivated by love. In Endymion the young poet wrote his ideals of a poetic life, his aspirations, hopes, flights of inspiration, and dreams of spiritual fulfillment, often veiled, it is true, but occasionally glowing in some striking verse. There are instances of self-revelation in every book, the eternal questioning.

The thorough analysis of the entire poem is the basis for conclusions upon the four phases of recent criticism reviewed in the first chapter: (1) the effect of the poet's study of Elizabethan writers upon the

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1. See above, pp. 91-92
2. See above, p. 131
3. See above, p. 172

structure and thought of Endymion; (2) the question of an allegorical interpretation; (3) the psychological significance of specific lines and passages; and (4) the morphology of the poem. First, analytical evidence was submitted in chapter eight in favor of the proposition that Endymion contained a neo-Platonic philosophy derived from his study of the Elizabethans. The presence of this philosophy, it was pointed out, accounts for much of the obscurity of the poem. Second, I agree with those critics who maintain that there is an implied allegory in Endymion which was prefigured in Book One, 777-842, and that the nature of this allegory is the experience of a poet's soul in its quest for immortal Beauty. Third, the assertion that Endymion is psychological is supported by my analysis and interpretation of the fourth book. Single lines and passages with psychological significance were commented upon throughout the analysis and the final chapters. Fourth, the analysis discloses definitely in my opinion that the poem had a careful plan of construction, although it is admitted by all that there is a great profusion of poetic material. That profusion, the neo-Platonic philosophy, and Keats' lack of skill in narrative technique are responsible for the confusion and obscurity in the narrative noted by many critics.

Throughout the four thousand lines the unifying element is the poet's devotion to the "Idea . . . of Beauty in all things."[1] Keats justified his work by declaring it was a symposium of poetry, meant for the lovers of poetry "to wander in."[2]

1. See above, p. 206
2. See above, p. 208

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